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Southern Academic Review

A Student Journal of Scholarship

No. 6
Spring 1992

John Mark Allen
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"The Birthmark": An Allegory of Scientific Endeavor and Spiritual Conflict

John Mark Allen

Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" is a tragedy. Hawthorne narrates a tale that describes what originally seems to be an idyllic marriage. A famous eighteenth-century scientist of lofty spirit and intellect finds a noble and beautiful wife. But, as Hawthorne states early on, his devotion to science will make their relationship difficult. As he says, "His love for his young wife might prove the stronger of the two; but it could only be by intertwining itself with his love of science, and uniting the strength of the latter to his own" (268). This is, indeed, what occurs in the story. Aylmer, the husband, becomes evermore obsessed with the singular mark of imperfection on his wife's cheek. He sees this birthmark, a "tiny hand" (269) of discoloration so small as to be covered "with the tips of two small fingers" (270), as a badge of Georgiana's mortality and her liability to sin and death. He begins to think of applying his scientific genius toward removing the mark. In this way, the story proceeds allegorically along the path of a scientific endeavor. In keeping with this logic, the plot progression parallels the scientific method used in such endeavors (at least as it was thought of then).

The points of the scientific method, as delineated by Francis Bacon in his *Novum Organum* and other works, are observation, measurement, hypothesis, experiment, and verification. All of these points are present within "The Birthmark."

The significance of this scientific underpinning is the insight that it gives of Aylmer's motivation. Why should this highly intelligent man risk the life of his loving wife for a small blemish? How does his scientific train of mind factor in his philosophy and actions? The vein of the scientific method in the story leads to the very heart of these matters. The final destination is the mind/soul of Aylmer, wherein there lies unconscious spiritual confusion.

Even "very soon after their marriage" (268), Aylmer begins to observe Georgiana's blemish. To him, her exceptional beauty makes the mark all the more unbearable. In his opinion, the mark stands out as a stamp of her human finitude, and it causes "...him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight" (269). As the narrator relates, other people have seen the mark differently, both positively and negatively. To her male admirers, it was a romantic adornment. To her female competitors, it rendered her ugly. In the story proper, however, only Aylmer's observations dictate the action. These observations represent the first stage of the scientific method, and, as such, the beginning of the scientific endeavor. Once Aylmer has focused on this fault, Georgiana is reduced to the place of a machine that is working at ninety-nine percent efficiency. The one percent becomes the focus of attention. For instance, most of us have had some little something wrong with our cars. The noise that the slightly-leaking "piffle valve" makes may be unnoticeable to others (i.e. mechanics), but the

owner/observer can pick it out in a few seconds and, henceforth, hear none of the proper workings around it. In a similar fashion, Aylmer becomes focused on the blemish till he can see little else of Georgiana.

Observation quickly leads to measurement. Aylmer sizes up the mark for shape and intensity. In this case, the reader can safely assume that Aylmer has noted all the points of the external description provided by the narrator: "The mark wore a tint of deeper crimson....When she blushed it gradually became more indistinct....Its shape bore not a little similarity to the human hand, though of the smallest pygmy size" (268-69). Given the grasp that this mark holds on Aylmer, it is remarkable to note that "he [had] thought little or nothing of the matter before" (269). It is as if he saw a diamond without a microscope, and later, upon seeing it under such, he found a tiny but devaluating flaw. To Aylmer, the flaw seems to increase with every passing day. That which requires only the smallest caliper for its measurement is subjected to the scrutiny of the electron microscope that is Aylmer's mind's eye.

As the story progresses, it becomes more and more obvious to both Georgiana and Aylmer that something needs to be done about the mark. For he thinks of nothing else, and she is tormented by the knowledge of his obsession. By this point, Aylmer is "convinced of the perfect practicability of its removal" (270). Aylmer has thought deeply on the subject. [In fact, he claims that he might now possess enough knowledge to even *create* a "being less perfect" than Georgiana (271)]. His hypothesis, then, is complete. He believes he understands the chemical nature of the blemish and how he can erase it. Although Georgiana is able to voice feelings (unlike an object!) her unequivocal assent to have the mark removed

does nothing to change her position in the story. For the sake of the scientific endeavor, her reality as the noble, loving wife or the stable and yet pliable object is immaterial. Unfortunately for both of them, Aylmer does not possess the necessary knowledge to accomplish its removal. What is more, he is unwilling or unable to recognize this truth. The narrator, possessing an understanding that Aylmer does not, reveals to the reader the nature of the story's enigma. In essence, Mother Nature "permits us, indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make" (271).

The next section of the story is analogous to the long period of experimentation and reevaluation that is the mainstay of science. The experiments carried out by Aylmer are unusually discrete. The perfumed vial may or may not be one of these. The gold-colored poison/cosmetic is one that he does not wish to use. Both Georgiana and the reader are unsure as to which of Aylmer's tricks are actually experiments. Nevertheless, she conjectures from his inquiries that the air she breathes and food she eats may indeed be a part of his scheme. By whatever means, the presence of experimentation is confirmed by her sensation of a "stirring up of her system" (274).

The setting and events of this section are as important as the experiments themselves. First, the setting holds a special significance for the couple's relationship. The redecorating of the laboratory and words such as "threshold" indicate that the consummation of the scientific endeavor will be the consummation of their marriage (271). Second, his laboratory assistant Aminadab functions as a counterpart to Aylmer. Hawthorne quite bluntly states that he represents man's "physical nature" while Aylmer is the spiritual (272). Third, the event with the quick flower,

dying at Georgiana's touch, carries the continuing theme of Nature's beauty and secrecy. The flower, like humanity, is finite. It should not be plucked and examined lest it wilt. It will neither reveal all its secrets nor blossom long. Lastly, it is ironic what he says of alchemy, because he has already "attain[ed] too lofty a wisdom," such that he cannot stoop to *reality* (273). More will be said on this last point shortly.

The last part of the story is, in method, the point of verification. Here, as in many actual scientific endeavors, success or failure rests upon the results of a final experiment. After Georgiana demonstrates her unswerving faith to him, Aylmer reveals that the mark does indeed have a strong grasp on her. There is, in fact, only one thing left to be tried. He and Aminadab meticulously distill this ultimate concoction, and then he takes it to her. Aylmer says (famous last words), "Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail" (277). Georgiana, despite the fact that she has read his experiment folio and knows that "his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures" (275), drinks the liquid without apprehension. She, both nobly and naively, wants nothing more than to please her husband. Ironically, she perceives herself, not Aylmer, to be at a moral impasse. Having drunk the liquid, she quickly passes into a deep sleep. Thereafter, a scientific and physical reversal occurs. Aylmer is, once again, in observation, but this time it is to watch the mark disappear. Tragically, the other reversal is a physical one affecting Georgiana. As the birthmark fades into nothing, so too her overall pallor becomes that of death. Before she passes into the ether world, however, she makes a remark that partially redeems her for wisdom: "'Do not repent,' she says, 'that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth could offer'"

(278).

As a scientific endeavor, therefore, Aylmer's work is a failure. According to the scientific method, it has failed at the point of verification. But what then is within the mind/soul of Aylmer to drive him to and through all this? It is confusion, but not of a small or everyday sort. His confusion is between the spiritual and scientific. Georgiana had noticed that he had a "strong and eager aspiration toward the infinite" (275). Yet, as the narrator states at the end:

> Had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with the celestial. (278)

Quite unrealistically, he was trying to "find the perfect future in the present" (278).

Even more specifically toward matters at hand, Aylmer has violated modern scientific methodology. His philosophical problem is, then, among other things, rooted amidst a scientific error. The error is to set up a purpose or final cause as a target for science. Both Francis Bacon and Renes Descartes, two founders of modern science, were in firm disapproval of this error. This teleological method, more or less a deductive one, was popular among both ancient and medieval scientists. To make a long method brief, they decided the way they thought things *should* be and managed to reason their way to like conclusions. (In all fairness, deductive reasoning has been and still is an important philosophical and scientific tool. In fact, deductive reasoning without a predetermined target was Descartes' *modus operandi*). This method brought two problems: it created incorrect conclusions by amassing assertions, and it prompted scientists to think about things that were only known to God (Baillie 16-17). As John

Baillie states, "This did not mean, however, that there are no final causes, but only that natural science has no business with them" (17). In other words, these are things that theologians should ponder, and not scientists.

Aylmer then, has created within his mind notions of perfection and beauty that do not apply to the very nature that he is to study. Thus, all his experiments are grand efforts in futility that produce only the tiniest gems of what he is after. Unfortunately for Georgiana, Nature is not something with which to be trifled. When Aylmer applies his odd brand of science to her person, there are "truly remarkable consequences and a deeply impressive moral" (268). The mystery of God's work is left intact. Aylmer would have done well to have read one of Bacon's aphorisms:

> The subtilty (sic) of nature is far beyond that of sense or of the understanding: so that the specious meditations, speculations, and theories of mankind are...but a kind of insanity, only there is no one to stand by and observe it [--or perhaps there is!] (Bacon 12).

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Castles of England and Wales in the Middle Ages: A Unique Combination of Home, Fortress, and Administrative Center

Amy Dingler

"...and they filled the land full of castles..."
-*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 1132
(qtd. in Muir 93)

Perhaps the most fascinating and compelling legacy we have from Medieval England is the castle. Our curiosity about this edifice is not idly provoked, for the castle was the focal point for medieval British society. Castles were crucial to lords of the middle ages, for they served as home, fortress, and administrative center all in one--a unique combination that has not been duplicated since. For this reason, it is only appropriate that these massive structures and the life that revolved around them should be carefully studied.

William Duke of Normandy invaded England in 1066 from Saint Valery, just to the north of Normandy, France, and immediately began constructing castles. However, William was not the first to fortify England. Sometimes his castles were built on the ruins of earlier fortifications, such as Roman fortresses, which themselves may have been

built on old Iron Age ruins, as those at Dover were (Brown 11). The Anglo-Saxons, after the Romans, built "burhs," which were fortified towns, but not true castles combining home and fortress. The idea for William the Conqueror's castles came from Byzantine Greece, where the "eastern Romans" (Brown 12) built poliginal walls with corner towers, one of which was the ultimate refuge of the garrison.

When William the Conqueror invaded in 1066, he brought the castle with him to England, where it would be developed from the original crude motte and baileys to perfection in the sophistocated concentric castles of Edward I in Wales. William's early fortresses of wood and timber as well as their stone descendants served as the "primary means by which a new and alien military aristocracy established themselves in England and Wales" (Brown 217). Then, once the Normans had securely ensconced themselves over their subjugated people, castles served to protect them from successive foreign waves of would-be conquerors, and, within the country, to guard one lord against the schemes of another.

However, each and every castle was meant to be a residence as well as a fortress, and when we speak of castles we refer to only those buildings that combine the two functions with defensive fortifications given predominance over domestic aspects of the structure. The earliest such structures were the simple motte and baileys consisting of a mound of earth, the motte, surrounded by one or more baileys, or courtyards. The bailey as well as the motte was protected by a deep ditch and an inner wooden palisade wall, then atop the motte within its palisade was a wooden tower which was the strongest point of this castle. Occasionally, however, in the simpler "ringwork" castle, the motte was ommitted from the

enclosure (Davison 35).

The wood and earth materials necessary for construction of motte and baileys were easily come by and no special skills were necessary for labor. Therefore, this type of castle was the most plentiful of all types because it was the quickest, easiest, and cheapest to construct. However, timber was weak, and susceptible to attack, especially by fire. So, motte and baileys were useful against surprise attacks, but not in longer sieges. Also, timber decayed quickly and had to be replaced continually in motte and bailey castles to keep them strong.

For this reason builders began to use stone, when it was available, in castle construction as soon as possible after the invasion. Stone, like wood, had its advantages and disadvantages. It was longer lasting than wood and stronger as well--therefore better able to withstand sieges. However, stone was difficult to transport, and took more time to quarry, as well as more time to build with. Stone also required skilled labor for construction, and was therefore a more expensive building material than wood.

Construction of stone castles required greater investments of time and money than motte and baileys, and stone castles were more permanent once completed. For this reason, they were not as randomly constructed as motte and baileys. Since the castle's first consideration was defense, lords chose building sites as naturally secure as were available. Castles were generally built on the highest and rockiest ground possible to guard against an enemy being able to tunnel under (undermine) the castle. Water surroundings like a lake, river, or moat also precluded undermining. Further, some sort of internal fresh water supply was essential for internal use in every castle, especially during times of siege. So a good underground water supply was necessary to tap into with the one or

more castle wells.

Castle architecture was developed and changed much in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, always with the main purpose of strengthening defense. Often changes in stone construction developed in direct response to new siege tactics. However, those studying castle development should also remember that its history is not a straightforward progression from timber to stone, or from one stone characteristic to the next. In fact, timber constructions persisted alongside stone even into the fourteenth century, and many stone innovations of the various centuries could be seen in a single castle as it was modernized and expanded over the years.

In the twelfth century, one of the first changes to be made in castles was the replacement of the wooden palisade atop the motte with stone to form what is known as a shell keep. Also, the wooden palisade surrounding many castles' baileys began to be replaced with stone to form a curtain wall just inside the outer ditch of the castle. When wooden keeps began to be built in stone, they had to be removed from the motte and located in the bailey, or have the motte leveled off to accommodate them. Without this change, the packed earth of the motte would settle and shift beneath the concentrated weight of a stone keep, causing the keeps walls to crack and crumble. Clifford's Tower in York suffered from this fate. The keep atop its motte began to crack even before construction was finished. For this reason, a planned third story was left off the tower, and even today the remaining structure requires underground supports to keep it from falling.

Stone keeps dating from the late eleventh century onward were the inner core of all successive fortifications. These "donjons," such as the White Tower of London, combined the fortified stronghold and residence of the lord

in one structure. Early stone keeps were rectangular, and their thick walls were crowned with battlements having the early addition of crenelations--tooth-like projections designed to afford some cover to defending archers. The base of the walls might have a sloping or splayed plinth which had a double function of making attack using battering rams more difficult, while causing rocks and other missiles dropped from the battlements to ricochet out among the attackers.

Almost all castles since the first motte and baileys had surrounding ditches to make attack more difficult. In stone keeps, the ditch outside the surrounding curtain wall served to prevent attackers from bringing siege towers up to the side of the castle. If not a ditch, castles would have a moat, which might be made by diverting a nearby stream. At least one castle, Kennilworth, was surrounded by a lake that had been enlarged for the purpose of defense. In any case, water defenses, like ditches, prevented the approach of siege towers and also made undermining almost impossible.

In the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, lords began to intersperse rectangular towers, called mural towers, along the curtain walls of their castles. Then, in the mid-thirteenth centuries, lords discovered that the corners of rectangular towers made them more susceptible to undermining, and gave "dead ground" for cover to attackers, so they began to make mural towers round or polygonal instead of rectangular. Furthermore, stone overhangings called machicolations were extended out from the battlements so that defenders could drop rocks or shoot down to the base of the wall into attackers without exposing themselves to fire.

Another defensive innovation was the gatehouse, which reached its apex in the latter thirteenth and fourteenth

century Welsh castles of Edward I. Experiments in fortifying the entrance to castles began by the end of the twelfth century, according to Davison (132). The purpose was to transform the castle's entrance from the weakest part of its defenses to the strongest. Gatehouses might consist of huge gate towers flanking the opening, which itself had numerous layers to penetrate for entry. These layers included heavy doors and another new type of gate called a portcullis, which differed from an ordinary gate in that it did not open in or out, but lowered from above possibly impaling attackers on its bottom spikes on the way down. Leading up to the gate there might be a walled passage or barbican, which functioned to limit the attackers approach to the gate. And finally, there were murder holes and arrow loops lining the interior walls of the gateway, so that each series of passageways and guard chambers became separate death traps for the attackers slowly penetrating within.

Castles reached the apex of their strength with the concentric castle, of which the best example is probably one of Edward I's castles, Beaumaris, in Wales. Concentric castles consisted of the buildings of the castle protected by two closely spaced curtain walls. The inner curtain was the taller of the two so that archers atop it could fire beyond the outer curtain wall, or even onto it, if it fell to the enemy. Concentric castles also had surrounding water defenses, and tons of masonry in the form of mural towers overlooked by even larger and more formidable inner towers.

Though we generally consider castles for the military functions mentioned above, they also served as homes to the great lords. To neglect this aspect of their use would be to ignore how the inhabitants of castles passed most of their time--in peace, rather than in war. R. Allen Brown

comments that

> at no period in its history was the castle filled only or always with the tramp and clatter of armed men: the sound of revelry in the hall, the rustle of ladies' dresses in the chambers of the queen, even the laughter of children in the garden, are as authentic a distant note for our ears to strain after as the shouts of battle and the clash of arms. (210)

It is, therefore, important to consider the domestic arrangements of the castle in order to be able to visualize the setting in which lords, ladies and their retinues passed their days of peace.

Without a doubt, the great hall was central to castle life. It was the largest room of the castle, and thus the logical site for carrying out daily business, eating meals, gathering to celebrate and entertain, and even to sleep. In the earliest motte and bailey castles, the great hall might have been contained in a donjon atop the motte. Or, if there was not enough room there, the great hall could be a building within the bailey. In the stone keeps of the twelfth century, the great hall often occupied an entire floor, usually the first (as opposed to the ground level, which might be used for storage of food or livestock, or as another hall, perhaps for the servants). By the thirteenth century, with many baileys secure behind curtain walls, more apartments, including the great hall, could be located in the bailey.

These great halls would not be considered very great or comfortable by modern standards. Cleanliness was minimal. Carpets were not generally used on the floor before the fourteenth century. Instead it was strewn with rushes and sometimes herbs. Apparently these were supposed to be changed often, but instead were usually simply covered with new layers. Underneath these layers

"lay an ancient collection of beer, grease, fragments of bone, spittle, excrement of dogs and cats, and everything that is nasty" (Erasmus qtd. in Gies 60).

Lighting and heat were also scarce. For defensive reasons, castle windows had to be long, narrow, and few between. Sources differ regarding how often windows were "glazed" after the appearance of glass in the thirteenth century. Norman Pounds holds that glazing was relatively expensive, and was not commonly found in secular buildings before the sixteenth century, except occasionally in the halls of the greatest royal and baronial castles (188). However Joseph and Frances Gies and Margaret Labarge propose that glazed windows were common by the fourteenth century (Gies 59; Labarge 22).

In any case, if not done in glass, windows from the eleventh century onward were covered with wooden grills or shutters secured by an iron bar, or by oiled linen coverings. Unfortunately, these methods of shutting out the cold shut out most of the light as well. So, castle rooms might have warmth or natural light, but not both at the same time.

Alternately, there were several types of artificial light available to castle occupants when the shutters were closed in winter or after the sun had gone down. They could light their halls with candles, rush lights, oil lamps in the form of bowls, or fires on the hearth--this last choice having the added advantage of heat. Yet, all of these methods of artificial light had drawbacks. Wax candles were expensive and therefore could not be used in profusion, while rush lights, which were made using grease or tallow (animal fat), were inefficient and probably smelled bad.

Fires, as always, smoked, but this was a greater nuisance in medieval halls where most fires were built on open hearths. Smoke from these fires sometimes simply

rose and drifted around the room, producing a sooty mess and stains such as the ones that can still be seen in the hall at Stokesay manor. However, sometimes castle buildings had louvers in the roofs or walls to facilitate the escape of smoke (Davison 82). In the late twelfth century, fireplaces built into the walls began to replace central hearths in castles such as Rochester and Hedingham (Pounds 189). But even then, as Burke points out, the chimney as such was not thought of until the latter thirteenth century; inhabitants had only flues piercing the walls for the smoke to exit through (33). So, with all the inconveniences and difficulties of heating and lighting a great hall, it often remained dark and cold, sometimes damp, and generally cheerless. It is little wonder that people of this age went to bed so soon after nightfall.

All these inconveniences aside, lords in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries made their halls as comfortable and rich by contemporary standards as they were able. This included the best furnishings and decorations they could afford. Probably they could not afford to furnish each individual castle, since so much of their possible expenditures were devoted to defense. For this reason, lords carried their furnishings with them from one holding to the next. Since furnishings had to travel well, they were usually as light and sparse as possible. Furnishings for a typical household might include a bed or two, a few trestle tables, benches, stools, a couple of chairs, and a few sturdy chests for the transport of linens and any cooking and eating utensils. Later, probably around the end of the thirteenth century when lords began to emphasize a castle's domestic amenities over defense, furniture such as beds and tables became more permanent and increasingly large and ornate (Labarge 34).

Decorations may have alleviated much of castles'

inherent gloom. Doors, windows, and fireplaces could have attractive arches and moldings. Walls were plastered and whitewashed inside and out, and often painted further or hung with strips of brightly colored cloth, tapestries, Eastern embroideries, or cheerfully painted cloths. These rich wall hangings all depicted scenes of battle, biblical history, romances, or legends, and so were flamboyant and bold. For example, Davison's *Observer's Book of Castles* tells us that Henry III's favorite design for wall paintings was gold stars on a green background (89), no doubt a striking combination. Further decorations for especially wealthy lords might include cupboards in which to display any gold and silver cups and platters they possessed. Then, after the introduction of carpet to England, it, too, might be found covering the walls, benches, or chairs.

Not all castle activities were carried out in the great hall. Fairly early in castle development the kitchen was given its own building apart from the great hall--probably because of the smell and potential fire hazard. And larger castles might have a bakehouse and brewery in buildings separate from the kitchen. Castles also had a buttery, where drinks were kept, and a pantry, for the storage of dry goods. Wardrobes, for tailoring and storage of cloth, spices, jewels, etc., were generally inside the main donjon, while the grange for hay storage, the granary, the stable, the dairy, the larder, and the forge were all scattered in the bailey, as were miscellaneous lodgings for clerks, chaplains, and constables. Then, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the houses of the castle came to be more consolidated within the inner defensive shell itself, which was, by that time, the strong inner curtain wall of a concentric castle.

Castles sometimes had a jail/gaol for the keeping of prisoners, as did the Tower of London, where a great many

royal prisoners were kept. Interestingly, its function as a prison has contributed most toward making the castle what Brown calls "romantically notorious"--thus the transformation of the word for the lord's noble residence, *donjon*, to the vile, dark, and terrible *dungeon* (Brown 212), of torture chambers and horror stories.

Having a rough sketch of the layout of the buildings of castles provides a rich setting in which to picture what we know about everyday life within castles. Daily meals were somewhat different then. Occupants of medieval castles rarely ate the meal we call breakfast. If they did, it consisted of little more than a hunk of black bread and a pot of ale. The main meal of the day was at ten or eleven o'clock, and was usually the social event of the day. Supper at about four or five o'clock was a lighter meal and more intimate than dinner unless there were guests.

The meal itself began with the spreading of a tablecloth before eating. An especially wealthy household might have platters, cups, and spoons made out of precious materials with which to eat. Otherwise, a thick slice of bread called a trencher served as a sort of platter with the meal, often a stew or paste, served on top. During the meal, two people ate off one dish with the younger serving the older or the man serving the lady (Labarge 124).

The actual diet of our subjects was not as limited as we have sometimes been led to believe. It was continually improving and becoming more varied in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries as a greater number of vegetables and spices came into use. Lords and ladies generally had meat (or fish on non-meat days of Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) at both meals of the day, and eggs and poultry as ingredients in other dishes. Meats served included beef, mutton, pork, bacon, veal, and venison, as well as poultry, geese and capons (77),

starling, pigeon, gull, peacock, and heron. These meats were sometimes served to the lord and lady in elaborate and complicated dishes, such as larks-tongue pie, which was quite a delicacy (Burke 39). However, since meat was usually from wild animals, giving it a tough, stringy consistency, it was most often boiled into a stew to soften it.

Medieval meals consisted of more than just meat. Thick and coarse bread was a staple of the daily diet, as was cheese. Other fare which could be provided by the castle's own garden included common fruits like apples and pears as well as vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes, onions, peas, beans, leeks, and cabbages. All dishes of the lords table could be seasoned with herbs like sage, parsley, fennel, and hyssop as well as spices like pepper, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, and sugar, which was considered a spice because it was so dear (Labarge 96).

Salt was a commodity necessary in the middle ages for more than flavoring. Because it was rarely known when or for how long a castle's lord would be in residence, castles had to stock food supplies as much as a year in advance. Foodstuffs could not have been stored in such great quantities for such long periods of time were it not for salt which could be used as a preservative in the drying of meats and fishes and in brine for pickling.

Although wine had to be imported, it was not uncommon to find it accompanying the meal. According to Burke, "wine from the barrel was poured into jugs and served at the top table, while the lower orders contented themselves with ale" (43). Beer and cider were also common everyday drinks, while water was seldom drunk due to possible pollution (102).

Because the days were so short in winter, a large amount of people's time was spent in bed, asleep. Sleeping

arrangements changed as castles developed throughout the middle ages. Initially, the lord and lady as well as attendants and certain household servants, slept in the great hall together, with the lord and lady secluded behind a curtain on the raised dais at the end of the hall. Later, there were stairs leading to a private room, sometimes called a solar, for the lord and lady above the hall, and cooks, grooms, stable-lads, and other help slept in the buildings where they worked. By the time of concentric castles, a whole suite of rooms would be set aside for a lord, and perhaps a separate one for his lady. There might be other suites for visiting nobles and their staffs in the castle's gatehouses and wall-towers, so that their upper stories functioned as what Davison labels, "high-rise apartment blocks" (78).

Few castles had large permanant garrisons because of the expense of maintaining them on a regular basis. Even in times of war, the defense of a castle did not usually require a large number of men (although the number of defenders needed varied with the size of the castle and differing circumstances). For these reasons, there was often no separate provision for the housing of a garrison in the design of a castle. When present, garrison soldiers slept in towers or basements, the hall, or "lean-to" structures in the bailey (Gies 69).

Many castles were equipped with separate "garderobes" or privies for use in answering the call of nature. These latrines may have emptied into a pit which some unfortunate servant would have to clean regularly. More often, though, they drained into the castle's moat or other water defenses, so were limited to rooms of the castle where an outside vent was possible. Sources differ on whether there were alternatives to the privy. For example, in regard to chamber pots, Davison says they "do not seem

to have been used" in the middle ages (91). However, Labarge states that chamber pots *were* used in lieu of latrines, according to purchasing accounts (25).

On the subject of other sanitation and cleanliness it should be noted that the only soap cheap enough and readily available to castle occupants was an unplesant concoction made on the premises out of meat fat, wood ash and soda (Burke 46). Considering the nature of soap and the cold and inconvenience involved in baths, it is little wonder how rarely full tub baths were taken. However, certain medieval books on etiquette advised individuals to wash at least their face, hands, and teeth in a basin of water every day.

When the knights and lords of castles were not at war, they and their ladies enjoyed quite a large and diverse selection of activities and entertainments. For both lords and ladies, the favorite outdoor pastime was the hunt, which fulfilled the important function of providing food as well as passing the time. In the Dialogue of the Exchequer around 1179, Richard Fitz Neal proclaimed that in the forest, lords "laying aside their cares...withdraw to refresh themselves with a little hunting; there, away from the turmoils inherent in a court, they breath the pleasure of natural freedom" (qtd. in Poole 2:617).

However, there was not much freedom involved in medieval hunting, which was governed by numerous regulations of etiquette elaborated in books like *Le Art de Venerie* and *The Master of Game* (618). Hunting was also governed by strict laws. Lords wishing to hunt had to apply to the king for grants of "vert and venison" (Labarge 167) which allowed them the administration of private forests. There, the huge game preserves with their quarries of deer, wild boars, rabbits and hares, etc. would be tended and guarded from poachers by foresters, warreners, and

even officers of forest courts. Most hunting was done with hounds trained to scent specific prey. Indeed we are told that Edward IV had a pack of hounds strictly for hunting otters! Another form of hunting, falconry or hawking, was an even more scientific and highly technical art than hunting with hounds. Remember that there were no guns at this time, and contrary to ground animals which could easily be cornered or worn out, flying birds were elusive, and almost impossible to get at with arrows. For this reason the falcon or hawk was revered. Yet these hunting birds were difficult to train and very delicate and expensive to maintain. Thus, much was written on the art of hawking, with the skilled falconer of the middle ages being lauded as "the aristocrat of huntsmen" (Burke 46).

Other outdoor entertainment for the nobility included the tournament, which came from France in the twelfth century. At that time, specifically in 1194, the tournament was imported and legalized by Richard I in order to improve the prowess of British knights. Early tournaments were a confused melee of knights randomly charging one another, and were consequently often dangerous--resembling a battle more than a game. But tournaments evolved into more civilized events of individual competition in jousting, tilting, and even wrestling, where ladies would overlook the competition. These "round table" events were great social occasions lasting several days accompanied by spectating, feasting, drinking, and dancing.

Indoors, there were a number of board games like tables--similar to backgammon, and merels--an elaborate form of tic-tac-toe, and chess--a war game between two armies on the board. Two forms of chess were known in the middle ages. One version, like the modern game, was dependant on skill, while the other was played by rolling dice (Labarge 175). Other games using dice were

common, and were often gambled upon to great extremes, "whole estates being stacked on a single throw" (Salzman 104). For the entertainment of children there were games like "hoodman blind," also known as "blind man's bluff," or "hot cockles," and pets like squirrels, monkeys, and, of course, dogs.

In fact, pets of various sorts were kept by all nobility. There were lap dogs as well as hunting dogs, and also birds like larks, nightingales, and popinjays, in addition to the hunting birds which were always kept on a special perch in the lord's or lady's private chamber. Performing bears, dogs, and monkeys were not uncommon, while kings kept everything from lions and leopards, to camels, porcupines, and elephants.

During and after meals, entertainment might be provided by "joculators," which were mimes or jesters performing acrobatics or juggling. Also, traveling actors might perform plays in return for hospitality (food and shelter). And always there were minstrels to play instruments and sing, and storytellers whose repertoire ranged from bawdy tales to epics and romances about Arthurian legend or such notable characters as Robin Hood. In any case, music was ubiquitous and additionally accompanied by staged dancing or dancing by the company itself.

Religion was very important to medieval people because they believed their souls would be judged after death according to their conduct during this life. Because of this emphasis on the spiritual, every castle had at least one private chapel for the morning mass and the several others of the day. Some castles had separate chapels for the lord and lady of the house, another for visiting nobles, and yet another for servants and retainers. These castles had a resident chaplain, and may have had more than one,

although in this case, the extra chaplains may have performed more administrative and secretarial duties than spiritual ones.

This medieval emphasis on spirituality extended beyond the castle chapel. Rarely could a castle be found without an accompanying parish church to see to the spiritual needs of the villagers. Also, the foundation of most monasteries was due to the munificence of some castle's lord, who gave the land on which it could be built. Monasteries served the lord in return by furnishing a burial site for him and his family, providing intercession for their souls, and supplying chaplains and priests to the castle.

Yet another function of the castle besides home and fortress was as place of business. Castles were the administrative sites for the lord's estates, as well as for the local town or village. With the possibility of several holdings, a lord had a very large and scattered estate to be managed. The castle's steward fulfilled the job of administering and managing the estate, supplying the table and keeping the household rolls, or accounts. There were also auditors to travel and oversee far-flung baronial lands, and a bailiff to collect rents, enforce owed labor, and maintain order. Finally clerks, and perhaps even chaplains, assisted castle correspondence and the keeping of castle accounts.

The role of the lady of the castle needs mention here, for she often took responsibility for administration of the castle and its lands, including making financial and legal decisions, in the absence of her lord. Women of the middle ages could even inherit castles or land, and some ladies took an active part in defending their castles in sieges, and even led armies into battle. For example, William the Conqueror's grandaughter Matilda led an army in person against her cousin Stephen of Blois in England's

twelfth century civil war, and Dame Nicholade la Haye heroically defended Lincoln castle against prince Louis of France and the rebel English barons shortly after the time of King John's death.

Aside from trained and often highly educated retainers, castle staff included a large number of common indoor and outdoor servants with various functions. Inside, there was a cook, a pantler in charge of the pantry, a butler in charge of the buttery, a baker, a butcher, wardrobers with seamstresses and laundresses, barbers, nurses, and chamber lads and maids. Outside, there was the watchman and/or gaoler, the marshal or groom, who cared for the horses, the smith or farrier, messengers, and carters for the transportation of goods.

The steward, in addition to running the castle, presided over manorial court, where decisions and verdicts were made for the townspeople by a jury. Baronial courts were the scenes of elections and marriages, as well as exchanges of land and registration of titles gained by succession or sales. Boundary disputes were settled here, and village agriculture was regulated. And equally important, manorial courts dealt with criminal justice in regard to petty crimes, assault, infringement on common roads, etc.

In royal castles, which were held by the crown rather than a baron, a constable or tenant-in-chief was appointed by the king to fulfill many of the same functions as the steward of the baronial castle. He was to collect the king's revenues (taxes), manage the estate including its lands, mills, staff, and servants, and was even responsible for entertaining guests of the crown. Royal castles also or alternately had a sheriff to carry out those functions. In addition, the sheriff was responsible for doling out the king's justice at the courts of the shire, guarding any royal prisoners, leading the local militia, and enforcing royal

laws.

Officials residing within castles were, in general, responsible for administering to towns and villages, so that castles were the administrative centers of the land. For example, Caernafon was built in Wales specifically to serve as its center of government. This regulatory function of castles is only one example of the close tie between a castle and its surrounding countryside, village, or city. A castle also needed the work force provided by the surrounding inhabitants, who, in turn, needed the castle for protection from outside attack.

Considering the castle's important connection to towns and churches and its unique role as home, fortress, and administrative center, it is understandable that castles flourished during the middle ages. What may be surprising to learn of is the gradual decline in building and maintenance of true castles in the latter fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, innovations of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries made for huge, complex structures that were massive undertakings when built from scratch. For this reason, fewer and fewer completely new castles were begun in successive centuries. Even undertaking additions and renovations to already existing castles was expensive. So, as Norman Pounds states, "the history of most castles in England is one of gradual decay punctuated by short periods of frantic repair and rebuilding" (Salzman 126).

Yet, there was more behind the tapering off of castle building than the high cost in terms of time and money. Changes in society in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were making the castle obsolete. One great change that took place was the decline of feudalism in conjunction with the rise of a wealthy merchant class. Remember that the lord of the castle was the overlord of the land. So with the

rise of trade, when fewer and fewer people were tied to the land, fewer were under the shadow of castles' control. Thus, the castle lost administrative power. Another change in society was the strengthening of medieval kings. This growth in royal authority meant that there was less need for powerful strongholds to preserve internal order in the countryside and to protect it from threats from abroad. Finally, the nature of warfare changed. Lords discovered that many mercenary footsoldiers could be maintained for the price of one mounted knight. Since the use of mercenaries supplied the larger numbers necessary for pitched battles, sieges were used less and less, making the castle militarily obsolete.

As castles gradually ceased to be militarily important, lords began to devote more thought and money to improving their residential side. At the end of the thirteenth century, the extensive rebuilding of castles often focused as much on interior comforts of hall, kitchen, or sleeping apartments as on exterior defenses. Then around the middle of the fourteenth century, domestic amenities began to be allowed actually to limit the castles military capabilities. Castles such as Nunney and Queenborough in Southern England were still substantial strongholds, but were typical of the transition in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from true castles to the more comfortable "fortified manor", which was "strong enough to resist a casual raid but not built to withstand a siege" (Salzman 92).

Castles of the fourteenth and fifteenth century were sacrificing defense to appearance as well as to comfort. To the "nouveaux riches" who had made their money in trade or in the wars, the castle was a status symbol of the lordship and nobility they aspired to. These new families built structures like that at Oxburgh Hall in Norfolk, and Herstmonceaux in East Sussex that have been called "cult

castles" (Thompson, *Rise* 164), "sham castles," and "toy fortresses" (Muir 125). Builders duplicated the look of real castles using decorative crenelated battlements and machicolations, narrow moats, and tall towers. However these devices were only to enhance appearance, so that "their military pretensions were generally slight, but they presented...a very bold front" (Pounds 260).

Not all castles of the fifteenth century sold out to comfort and appearance. Personal strongholds had to be maintained along the Scottish border region since Edward I had failed to conquer Scotland as he had conquered Wales. The pele towers of the northern border were scaled down versions of twelfth century keeps. Also, some castles continued to be inhabited and maintained in good condition, such as John of Gaunt's Kenilworth Castle, and royal Windsor and Winchester.

Still, the gradual evolution of the castle in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries produced a complete split of home and fortress by the early sixteenth century. At this time Tudor costal forts, which were for defense and not habitation, were being constructed along the southern coastline to guard against invasion and raids from the French. At the same time elsewhere in the country, the elaborate and luxurious Tudor country houses of the period were springing up. No longer was the lord's home combined in a single structure with his fortress. Great castles of the twelfth, thirteenth, and even fourteenth century like Dover and the White Tower of London continued to be used, even into the twentieth century. However, the day of castles had passed, and there has not existed before or since another such unique combination of home, fortress, and administrative center contained within the same structure.

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Straightening a Turn: A Response to V. S. Naipaul's *A Turn In the South*

Wesley Edwards

Included on the reading list for one of my first classes at Emory University was a book called *The Enigma of Arrival* by the Trinidadian author V.S. Naipaul. I was impressed by Naipaul's elegant prose and his meaningful use of detailed observations. He writes at length in *The Enigma of Arrival* of his move from his native Trinidad to faraway England. His careful treatment of the topic of moving and maturing was particularly profound because, as a new college student at the time, I found his themes quite relevant. I wrote one of my first college papers on Naipaul and personal growth.

I have not forgotten that challenging course or that incisive author, V.S. Naipaul. He helped me understand my Interim in Service-Learning to Zimbabwe two years ago through his book about the Ivory Coast (and the Third World in general), *Finding the Center*. I was quite anxious, therefore, to read one of Naipaul's latest works, *A Turn in the South*. V.S. Naipaul had visited the American South and had trained his formidable powers of observation on a culture unique to the United States. In

particular, I was interested in reading what Naipaul--a writer who has traveled extensively in Africa and Asia and who has written provocatively about many of their cultures--wrote about race relations in the modern South.

As it turns out, Naipaul offers several theses dealing with the post-Civil Rights Movement South. However, as with any Naipaul work, these theses are not explicitly stated. Naipaul's effectiveness as a writer is found in his ability to piece together loosely a series of vignettes, conversations, and observations that suggest common meanings. These meanings are open to wide interpretation and are well worth discussion. I will present what I believe to be the three central themes of V.S. Naipaul's *A Turn in the South*, especially as contained in its chapter on Atlanta. After I set forth these themes, I will discuss their validity.

A Turn in the South is V.S. Naipaul's account of his brief visit to the region. He begins his journey near Greensboro, North Carolina, then moves on to Atlanta, Charleston, Tallahassee, Tuskegee, Jackson, Nashville, and Chapel Hill. Along the way, Naipaul characteristically presents scores of conversations with politicians, writers, lawyers, businessmen, and others. Much of the book is their response to this visitor, their pride in showing him their home, their ease of conversation about people and places they love. (One eager businessman even escorts Naipaul to Elvis Presley's birthplace in Tupelo, Mississippi.) Naipaul extracts from this wealth of encounters--each carefully and lovingly presented--an important essay on modern Southern culture.

Naipaul is at once interested in race. When he visits a black church in Greensboro, he describes a sanctuary painting of Christ's baptism in which "[t]he whiteness of Christ and the Baptist was a surprise" (14). When he

arrives in Atlanta, believing it to be the capital of the New South and a place run largely by a black elite, Naipaul is nonplussed when his first interview leads him to conclude:

> I had felt that the grand new buildings of Atlanta one had seen in so many photographs had as little to do with blacks as the buildings of Nairobi, say, had to do with the financial or building skills of the Africans of Kenya. I had felt that the talk of black power and black aristocracy was a little too pat and sudden. (26)

After surveying Atlanta's substantial suburbanization, Naipaul concludes that "[t]he white suburbs could get by quite well without the black-run city center" (28). Naipaul's conclusion in the Atlanta chapter is that race is badly misperceived. He notes a separation of black and white, "a formal society, private lives, a formal view" (27) in which the only substantial connection between races is commerce. Inaccurate stories of a black Atlanta elite lead to a popular misconception of the state of race relations in the city. In fact, black-white separation in areas beyond commerce hampers city leadership and slows progress in what Naipaul believes to be a more pressing issue--economic enhancement of the impoverished. Naipaul offers an example: the 1985 Walk for Brotherhood into all-white Forsyth County, Georgia, in which demonstrators marched for open housing and stood against the Ku Klux Klan.

The march is Naipaul's *cause celebre*. It represents the turns Naipaul sees the South as having taken in its recent history. The forces that oppress black people have turned. The focus of Atlanta leadership has turned. The accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement notwithstanding, blacks largely still have not fully turned from a segregated society to a more egalitarian one. They

still struggle--not against discrimination so much as against economics. Meanwhile, community leaders try to build commerce. [Of Atlanta's formidable convention business, Naipaul writes, "It was hard to think that these hotels could all be full at the same time" (38).] Naipaul seems to want Atlanta's black community to turn fully--their leaders from their drive for commerce to a greater understanding of real-life issues; the black community itself from a misunderstanding of the nature of the powers that oppress them.

Naipaul's assertion is not quite that simple, though. He notes that there is a divergent black leadership at work in Atlanta: one old-style protest leadership that Hosea Williams, a lieutenant of Martin Luther King, Jr., exemplifies; one modern leadership more interested in bringing new wealth to the city (i.e., Michael Lomax, Chairman of the Fulton County Commission; and Marvin Arrington, President of the Atlanta City Council). The Forsyth County incident shows the futility of the old leadership and the difficulty of the new.

Williams interceded when he found that a small group of protesters was planning to march in all-white Forsyth County, northeast of Atlanta. Williams led this first group of about fifty in a protest against segregation in housing. Upon reaching the county seat of Cumming, Williams and the marchers were attacked by the Ku Klux Klan. A week later, Forsyth County drew international attention as twenty thousand people marched against Forsyth's all-white status and the attack on the first marchers (36). Naipaul's point is made clear in his visit with the Forsyth County sheriff:

> And though [the sheriff] didn't say so, there came out from his talk the idea of two sets of people looking for attention [at the march]. The civil-rights groups, their major battles and indeed their war won

> long ago, now squabbling, and looking for causes; and the white supremacists looking in almost the same way for publicity and patronage. The great Forsyth march, as the sheriff described it, was like a ritual conflict, played out before the cameras, and according to certain rules. Out of this formalizing, the issue had died. (53)

To Naipaul, the march was a failure: "The county remained all white" (54). He quotes Andrew Young, then mayor of Atlanta, as saying after the Forsyth march, "What we are dealing with in Georgia now is a problem of the underclass--black and white....You can march until your feet drop, but you ain't going to change [economic problems] that way" (qtd. 54).

Naipaul's assertion is clear: Race relations in Atlanta are misconstrued. Racial harmony is limited to a common desire to make the city a profitable business community. In the absence of the fabled black elite, progress on economic development issues is slow. Further, within the black community, leadership is especially difficult as some leaders, such as Hosea Williams, cling to Movement-style efforts such as the futile Forsyth march while others, such as Michael Lomax and Andrew Young, struggle to make the city and its businesses economically powerful. Thus, there is a lack of unified black-black as well as black-white leadership on issues of concern to the entire community--issues of poverty, the underclass, crime, and others.

This thesis leads Naipaul into a second one--that of the larger culture that surrounds these patterns of leadership. Naipaul suggests that within Southern culture the debility of community leadership as exemplified in Atlanta heightens the importance of status groups and religion. Throughout the book, Naipaul asserts that religion is a source of personal and community identity. Naipaul

comments after a conversation about ministerial work with a religion scholar:

> In the United States, and especially in the South, religious faith was almost universal, and a religious vocation was as likely as any other. It was something a man could turn to for a number of reasons; and what I heard from this scholar was that some of the people he was in touch with (and he meant white people) had turned to the religious life in order to be confirmed in their identity: people from poor families who felt racially threatened by the new developments in the South, people who, in the booming new South, had gone into business and had then felt themselves drifting so far from the Southern world they had known that they had given up, to return to God and the life they felt more at ease in. (34)

Later, a theology student reinforces the point in telling Naipaul of her upbringing:

> The way my identity was formed was by my family and by who we were in Jackson and in Mississippi. In the Presbyterian church we had our own pew. And that was your identity. My aunt was shocked one day when she went to church and found a stranger in her pew. (47)

Naipaul's conclusion is that "[r]eligion was like something in the air, a store of emotion on which people could draw according to their need" (69). To some, it is piety and correctness, to others, emotional ventilation, but to all, a primary molder of the culture and a solid institution that leads when other institutions cannot.

However, Naipaul does not leave religion as the only element to fill the vacuum of community leadership in the South. In a near-comical tone in the latter half of the

book, Naipaul becomes fascinated with "red culture," that is, the culture of the Southern redneck. When Naipaul talks with a liberal white matron named Ellen in Jackson, Mississippi, he is suggesting a contextual class structure--an awareness of class that surrounds Southern culture. Ellen recalls an aunt telling her, "'Ellen dear, there are some things we just don't do.' There were some *people* we just didn't go around" (qtd. 159; italics in text). The people Ellen's aunt is referring to include Naipaul's rednecks. Naipaul views red culture as a sort of religion, an identity, and thus an organization providing community leadership of some form. For instance, in describing a poster of Elvis Presley, the hero of redneck heroes, Naipaul notes that it is "religious art of a kind with Christian borrowings: the beatification of the central figure, with all his sexuality. Graceland like a version of the New Jerusalem in a medieval Doomsday painting" (227). Naipaul makes the relationship even clearer in equating the Presley cult with the "black political adulation" in the post-British West Indies (227).

Naipaul further describes the red culture--its tendency toward violence, its particular folk music, and so on. Naipaul is more general in expressing the culture's uncertain relationship with the intelligentsia. He notes in his conversations (especially with Atlanta novelist Anne Rivers Siddons) a discouraged role of intellect, not just by rednecks, but by the larger Southern culture as well. Siddons says of her grammar school, "I spent twelve years trying to hide the fact that I was a bright child. Intellect has had no place here" (qtd. 38). In Naipaul's mind, this discouraged role of intellect is part of what makes leadership difficult in the post-Civil-Rights South. Some of those who can lead do not (not to say that intellect and leadership are always joined). This Southern culture--with

its diverse population of blacks, rednecks, religious zealots, and other groups--is almost impossible to lead, especially on matters of race.

Naipaul weaves this thesis of religion and culture together with his thesis on race and community leadership to form a third and final point. In simple terms, Naipaul argues that history is a burden that cultural and political leaders strain to lift. History--a history marked by civil war and reconstruction and, a century later, perhaps a second civil war and reconstruction--has turned the South. However, to many poor Southerners, black and white, making the turn seems to have brought the South to a more difficult and ambiguous era. The burden of this cultural sentiment hobbles effective leadership. Naipaul sees in the South a glorification and romanticization of history and an unwillingness to turn fully away from segregated days past--a turn the Civil Rights Movement would seem to demand.

Naipaul returns to Anne Rivers Siddons to define on a personal level the magnitude of this stifling burden of racial history in the South:

> I deal with race in some form in every book I've written. It's my great war, I guess. I write to find out where I am now, what I think, to make order and simplicity in my own world. It's an impossible task. You can't simplify that. You can only clarify bits of it. (qtd. 41)

Earlier, during a conversation about racial identity with a white Atlanta lawyer, Naipaul comments:

> It was there, then, as [*Atlanta Constitution* columnist] Tom Teepen had told me, at the back of everything, however unspoken: the thought of race, the little neurosis, the legacy of slavery. (29-30)

Even though the Civil Rights era has passed, even though the final shots of the Civil War were fired over a hundred

years ago, they still capture a culture and draw attention that might otherwise be focused on the future, on progress away from what Naipaul calls the South's "unmentionable past" (18).

Naipaul's work is both fascinating and challenging. *A Turn in the South* offers some weighty arguments about the nature of race relations in the post-Civil-Rights-Movement South. Naipaul's commentary presents a South struggling for change. This change--this turn--must be understood. How valid are Naipaul's arguments about the turn in the South?

First of all, any book about the South is limited by logic. It is virtually impossible for a writer even of Naipaul's ability to test a sample of people or places that is representative of the region. The South, however it is defined, does not lend itself to easy categorization. It is not a homogeneous place. Atlanta is obviously different from Jackson, Charleston from Chapel Hill. However, Naipaul--a brilliant observer--resists overgeneralization. He presents a deep and diverse set of observations. His trained eye and graceful pen catch astounding details of personality, place, and time. Naipaul does not pretend that these details are uniform across the South. For instance, when interviewing Anne Rivers Siddons at a downtown Atlanta hotel, Naipaul notes that fashion designer Gloria Vanderbilt is across the street in a department store on a promotional tour. Naipaul places this detail about Atlanta into his larger characterization of the city and its simultaneous affluence and poverty without generalizing across the entire region. (His details about Tuskegee are much different, but equally vibrant and telling.) Valid conclusions about Southern culture come from the pattern of details and insights Naipaul offers.

Now a brief treatment of the three specific theses

outlined above. Naipaul's assertion that commerce is the only substantial link between whites and blacks in Atlanta--a narrow link that hampers leadership in other areas of the community (namely, coping with the underclass)--is certainly notable. One may ask, though, in a city that bills itself as a city too busy to hate, a city in which commerce is supreme, what greater measure of new racial harmony there is than a black-white partnership at high levels of commerce? Naipaul should develop his more reasonable argument that, regardless of race, Atlanta's leadership is preoccupied with making Atlanta the business hub of the nation at the expense of serving all the city's citizens. It is difficult to believe that a city preparing to host the Olympic Games is unable to muster enough community leadership to deal with matters of race in spheres other than commerce.

In rightly pointing out the need for stronger urban leadership to deal with the underclass, though, Naipaul is pointing out a need not exclusive to the South, for no city in the United States has been able to check the problem of the underclass. In the case of Atlanta, however, former President Jimmy Carter recently launched the Atlanta Project--a program designed to bring together community leaders and volunteers in an effort to develop new partnerships to deal with Atlanta's staggering social problems (i.e., homelessness, crime, drugs, inferior education, etc.). Naipaul probably would applaud the effort.

Race in Atlanta is not as misperceived as Naipaul thinks it is; rather, the urban world is misperceived. The problems in leadership that Naipaul says are typified in the Forsyth County march owe more to a complex process of suburbanization and center-city decline than to a misunderstanding of the depth of racial cooperation in

Atlanta. Of course, race does contribute to suburbanization. Naipaul does not suggest this point. He argues that black power in Atlanta is overestimated. What he fails to consider is that Atlanta itself is overestimated. Blacks have solid control of the city, an unbreakable elite included. Meanwhile, white suburbia, which dwarfs Atlanta in physical size and population, is beyond their reach. Therein lies the misconception.

Naipaul's point about a divided leadership within the black community is well taken. Further, his point about the failure of some in the South to turn fully from the struggles of the decades-old Civil Rights protests to an understanding of the new economic struggle of the underclass is indeed the base of the divided leadership, though Naipaul does not emphasize the point as strongly as he might.

Finally, Naipaul almost completely discounts the relevance of the March for Brotherhood. I disagree with his interpretation. Even though the march was unsuccessful in opening Forsyth County to blacks, it was a symbolic success. To a new era of Americans who know little of the Civil Rights Movement and even less of the pre-Civil Rights South, the Forsyth march was a new testament to the futility and backwardness of the group of white supremacists that attacked the first band of marchers. The twenty thousand who marched a week later showed them they were anachronisms, ludicrous holdovers from an era now dead. If Naipaul had stopped in Montgomery at Morris Dees's Southern Poverty Law Center to learn of that organization's effort to stamp out hate crimes and punish those who commit them or if he had been in Louisiana to witness David Duke's dastardly campaigns for statewide office, he would not have so quickly discounted both the presence of old-fashioned racism and the necessary

symbolism of the Forsyth County march, a reaction against everything white supremacists represent. Both symbolic measures like Forsyth County and concrete work such as that done at the Southern Poverty Law Center are timely and necessary.

Naipaul's second thesis is more accurate than his first. Religion and mass culture do indeed hold influential positions in the South. They influence the culture as agents of socialization. Religion is powerful. Likewise, red culture is powerful. And one has to look only as far as the isolating gates of Birmingham-Southern College to find evidence (at least symbolic evidence) of the distance between the intelligentsia and the larger community. (Anne Rivers Siddons seems to be as graceful an observer of the South as the Trinidadian Naipaul.) On the whole, Naipaul's assertions are well-founded. In the absence of strong leadership (for whatever reason it is absent), other cultural organizations and institutions hold a more meaningful influence on the larger culture. At this point, Naipaul shifts from discussing modern race to discussing larger patterns of sociology. He conveys a fascination with religion and with red culture; however, it is ultimately unclear what Naipaul's underlying point is, other than the fact that subcultures such as the redneck's and religion are important. Unquestionably, they are.

As for the burden of Southern history, Naipaul's thesis is well-grounded. His work is similar to the arguments in C. Vann Woodward's collection of essays titled, oddly enough, *The Burden of Southern History*. Perhaps Naipaul toured the South as a means of proving what historians such as Woodward have been writing for years: that the South has a unique and captivating history. Naipaul modernizes, personalizes, and ultimately ratifies the Woodward thesis. Southern history remains a singularly

important history. The context it sets for the modern South is crucial. I question, though, the extent to which Naipaul takes the point. Is the South transfixed by its history to the point of narcissism? Does it hinder a movement into the future, especially in terms of race? I think not.

It is not a simple love of days past that inhibits the Southern leader. Leadership has become more difficult--not just in the South, but across the nation--as our culture faces more difficult and seemingly uncheckable problems, especially in the area of race. The theme of *Common Ground*, J. Anthony Lukas's brilliant, Pulitzer-winning study of Boston's busing crisis, supports Naipaul's notions of leadership. Culture and community do influence leadership in striking ways, not just in terms of the tangible results of leadership, like school busing in Boston, but in terms of the style and measure of leadership. Judge Arthur Garrity, a central leader in *Common Ground*, is insulated by judicial robes, yet he still feels the powerful forces of his community directing him. This point is obvious to both Naipaul and Lukas.

However, there is more to be said. *Common Ground* also exhibits the unthinkable complexity of modern societal problems in ways *A Turn in the South* does not. There are obviously community pressures at work on leaders. More importantly, though, there are also pressures borne by a set of problems that offer virtually no easily obtainable solutions. In the South, these run the gamut from agricultural subsidies to urban decomposition. Naipaul places the blame for the failure to progress on a fascination with a rosy, nostalgic revision of history and a popular unwillingness to turn away from Civil Rights-era problems and problem-solving. Perhaps, though, blame is impossible, even unnecessary, to place. The problems that Naipaul suggests are important--such as economic

development--are simply too large to break down so easily. As Lukas and the story of *Common Ground* would suggest, some problems are too complex to offer easy answers.

In closing, perhaps in V.S. Naipaul's next book, he will discuss Selma. There he will find black councilman Ed Moss and white mayor Joe Smitherman in a productive if often contentious coexistence. Progress like this is what we should consider--whites and blacks in valuable interaction; constructive conflict; meaningful, yet painful engagement. That Selma is filled with antebellum homes and proud statues of Confederate heroes and that it periodically hosts a Civil War battle reenactment seem to rebut Naipaul's point. As does Atlanta. A few miles from the site of the Civil War Battle of Kennesaw in Georgia is Atlanta, where in four years people from all over the world will congregate in peaceful athletic competition in the Olympic Games--the product of the leadership of a sincerely devoted biracial community.

V.S. Naipaul's observations in *A Turn in the South* are proof of an undeniable, ongoing struggle for community's coexistence with equality--the same coexistence hoped for in *Common Ground*. Even though I disagree with parts of Naipaul's argument in *A Turn in the South*, I still admire his writing and his ability to ask difficult questions gently--the same ability I saw in *The Enigma of Arrival* several years ago. If nothing else, *A Turn in the South* constructively argues that race still affects most aspects of the post-Civil Rights Movement South.

It also describes a monumental turn: a turn from the narrow South of Robert E. Lee and George Wallace; even a turn from the South of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Hosea Williams. Wherever the turn leads, one unalterable fact will remain for the South: race matters. Race is an undying element in the region's future. It is important on

personal as well as community levels. Thus, I return to Anne Rivers Siddons's comment with a new emphasis: "It's an impossible task. You can't simplify [race]. You can only clarify bits of it" (qtd. in Naipaul 41). If Siddons and Naipaul are correct, the issue of race must be continually confronted and clarified. That is an honorable struggle indeed. It is the struggle to turn the South.

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The Sacred Hoop: Four in One

Stephen Nickson

The sacred hoop. East: daybreak-spring-red-peace pipe-buffalo-birth. South: noon-summer-yellow-flowering stick-elk-maturity. West: sunset-fall-black-cup and bow-thunderbird-old age. North: darkness-winter-white-healing herb-goose-death. The sacred hoop.

These words were the literal curves of the sacred hoop, which was the holy circle of the Native American culture. These were the symbols, both literal and metaphorical, that dominated the culture of the American Indians. In many respects, the sacred hoop was the culture of the American Indians. It was the molding force of every aspect of their society, from the way they practiced their religion and educated their children to the way they built their lodgings and remembered their ancestors. It was the Ojibwa way; it was the Sioux way; it was the Native American way. But the hoop was broken and the ways were almost lost with the coming of the white people. We took away their land, killed their animals, and tried to make them forget their own culture. So the hoop was broken, but not forgotten. It only lay dormant, waiting to be restored by its people; ironically, this has been done with the traditional weapon of the white imperialist society: the written word.

It has been through the written word that the hoop has also been allowed to mend. The first major work came in 1932 with *Black Elk Speaks*. This spring in a vast literary desert, which formed a weak stream, was fed by later works such as *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions* and *Night Flying Woman*. Through these works, we can trace the cycle of the sacred hoop and begin to understand the importance of this concept to Indian society and its survival.

The sacred hoop: East: daybreak-spring-red-peace pipe-buffalo-birth.

The first cycle is that of birth and development. Soon after birth, a child had to be named. Names are very important to the Indian people:

> Words, too, are symbols and convey great power, especially names. Not Charles, Dick, and George. There's not much power in those. But Red Cloud, Black Elk, Whirlwind, Two Moons, Lame Deer--these names have a relationship to the great spirit. Each Indian name has a story behind it, a vision, a quest for dreams. We receive great gifts from the source of a name; it links us with nature, to the animal nations. It gives power. You can lean on a name, get strength from it. It is a special name for you and you alone--not a Dick, George, Charles kind of thing. (Lame Deer 105)

Each narrator tells the story of their names; Black Elk received his from his father, a great medicine man; Ignita Broker's grandmother was named Ni-bo-wi-se-gwi, which means Night Flying Woman, because she was born during an eclipse. During Lame Deer's first vision he saw the death of Tacha Ushte (which is Sioux for Lame Deer), his

great-grandfather, and because of this it was interpreted that he should take his name.

So even the names of Indians are from a cycle of their ancestors or of nature, and such was their education. They learned by watching and listening to their elders. Oona, which was Night Flying Woman's nickname, "sat before her grandparents with eyes cast down, watching them do the many tasks of life and listening as they spoke of the animal ways" (Broker 42-43). Black Elk speaks of a different kind of education, one of a warrior: "We practiced endurance, too. Our advisor would put dry sunflower seeds on top of our wrists. They were lit at the top, and we had to let them burn down clear to our skin" (Neihardt 60). Lame Deer remembers that when he was left alone to have his first vision, he was sixteen and it was the first time he'd ever been alone in his life. All three narrators emphasized the heavy influence of the family during their childhoods; and no matter what the children did, a harsh hand was never raised against them. This was to inspire the children to interact and be part of the family. The Indian community was not divided into "separate, neat little families--Pa, Ma, the kids, and the hell with everybody else. The whole damn tribe is one big family; that's our kind of reality" (Lame Deer 34). But Lame Deer complains that the children of today are too overrun by white society's technology and entertainment. He fears that they are too preoccupied with "...television and stereo to hear a good old fashioned Indian story" (22). This is a modern day encroachment of white culture that limits the mending of the sacred hoop.

This encroachment of white culture began long ago and was inspired by white greed for land. This lust for the already limited Sioux reservation tracts led to the virtual extinction of the most sacred animal of the Sioux, the

mighty buffalo. Black Elk laments the white man's unforgivable disregard for the life of this awesome beast:

> As I told you, it was in the summer of my twentieth year (1883) that I performed the ceremony of the elk. That fall, they say, the last of the bison herds was slaughtered by the Wasichus [white men]. I can remember when the bison were so many that they could not be counted...but the white men killed them for the metal that makes them crazy....sometimes they did not even take the tongues; they just killed and killed because they like to do that. When we hunted bison, we killed only what we needed. (Neihardt 213)

The white man took away the only reason that the Sioux had remained on the plains; an entire species was almost completely destroyed for more land. Lame Deer provides an explanation for why the white man's destruction shattered that part of the sacred hoop forever: "We Sioux have a close relationship to the buffalo. He is our brother...And the Indians are built like buffalo, too--big shoulders, narrow hips" (Lame Deer 119). The buffalo gave the Sioux everything they needed for living: food, shelter, and tools. No part was wasted. Their legends say that the buffalo even gave them their most sacred object, the peace pipe, which at the end of his narrative Lame Deer hides from his own people to prevent its commercialization. This was one gift of the buffalo that the whites could not take away.

Black Elk begins his narrative with an explanation of the peace pipe's symbols:

> The four ribbons hanging here on the stem are the four corners of the universe. The black one is for the west where the thunder beings live to send us rain; the white one for the north, whence comes the

> great white cleansing wind; the red one from the east, whence springs the light and where the morning star lives to give men wisdom; the yellow for the south, whence comes the summer and the power to grow. (Neihardt 2)

The pipe is an important part of each of the ceremonies and dances that Black Elk later takes part in or performs. In Lame Deer's narrative, the importance of the peace pipe is stressed as a distinctly native American article; it is not something to be tampered with. "At Pine Ridge they are building a new Catholic church in the shape of a tepee with a peace pipe next to the cross" (Lame Deer 205). This is very confusing for him. Why try to breed the religions into one? Lame Deer sees the peace pipe as "our [the Native American's] most sacred possession. All our religion flows from it. The sacred pipe is at the heart of all of our ceremonies, no matter how different they are from each another" (239). The central importance of the peace pipe was most evident in *Night Flying Woman*. Although the writer, Ignatia Broker, is an Ojibwa, and Black Elk and Lame Deer are Sioux, the peace pipe still dominates every ceremony or action in the narrative. The peace pipe is mentioned after every ceremony or act of significance, including her naming ceremony (14), the council of discussion (21), gratitude for safe travel (31, 35), celebration of the new home (41), treaty with whites (64), celebration of new life with old (85), to communicate with the Great Being in time of trouble (110), and to dream of ways to make the reunion of her family possible (128). So it is easy to see that the peace pipe was more than just a religious tool. It was used for times of celebration and meditation as well. For these people the smoke from the bark of the red willow was the breath of Wakan-Tanka; it was their way of communication with their God, for which

they needed "the pipe, the earth we sit on and the open sky" (Lame Deer 2).

The Sacred Hoop: South: noon-summer-yellow-flowering stick-elk-maturity.

The second cycle is that of maturity, growth, and coming of age. The coming of age was very early for the Native American. Oona received her piece of charcoal and went into the woods for her vision at a mere thirteen. Black Elk had a great vision he could not understand but that still shaped his life when he was nine. He says: "The boys of my people began very young to learn the ways of the men, but no one taught us; we just learned by doing what we saw, and we were warriors at a time when boys now are like girls" (Neihardt 20). But Lame Deer was not ready for his vision until he was sixteen; he was born in the time of the Wasichus, and therefore his spiritual life was interfered with by the white schooling and imposed regimen. Thus, Lame Deer came of age in a white society that rejected him; it even taught him to reject himself:

> When I was a kid, those schools were really bad. I envied my father, who never had to go through this....so I played the dumb Indian. They couldn't make me into an apple, red on the outside, white on the inside. (Lame Deer 25)

During this part of his life, Lame Deer rejected everything that society, white or red, had to offer him. He was, by white standards, a vagrant; he had no permanent job, he spent time in jail, and used every spare dime to get drunk. He was truly lost between two worlds: an Indian world where there was a conflict of old and new ways, and a white world which persecuted and discriminated against the Indian, whether he acted Indian or not. So Lame Deer

chose the Indian way, because he realized that in the end the white world was just a green frog-skinned [money] dominated world, a "bad dream, a streamlined, smog-filled nightmare" (33).

Such a world did not exist for Oona and Black Elk, at least not when they were growing up. But the encroachment of the white way of life did exist, for when Oona went to seek her vision, she could not stay the customary ten days. Because the white woman for whom her mother worked opposed such "heathen" customs, Oona had a much shorter "time of meditation and the beauty of isolation" (Broker 95). Oona's people had run from the whites while she was growing up, but the whites had caught up with them and were imposing on every aspect of their lives. Like Lame Deer, she had to make choices between white and red customs. But the difference was that she was choosing for her people, not just for herself. However, she was able to reach a compromise, mostly through the efforts of her mother. She accepted those things of the whites which were faster and easier, such as mason jars and iron kettles. But she learned to be wary of the white man's tongue, and often she had to rely on the old ways, in things religious and more practical, such as the dreaming power, her people's medicine, and their old system of crop gathering, because the white man often did not come through on his promises:

> When the payment was over and the people received their rations--the promised food that seldom came. Oona looked at their portion-the salt pork, the beans, the small amount of flower--and she said to her mother,"It is well that we plant and harvest and hunt, for this food given us by the White Father would not be enough." (Broker 99)

However, it was the great vision of Black Elk which

encompassed every aspect of the second arc of the sacred hoop: "From where the giant lives (the north) to where you always face (the south) the red road goes, the road of good, and on it your nation shall walk" (Neihardt 29). This was the road of maturity, the road on which the people could prosper. It was on this road that the flowing stick of the nation, the very center of the sacred hoop, the blessed cotton tree, had to be planted. Black Elk understood very little of this, but these signs made him realize that he had come of age, and he would soon be a great leader for his people.

The Sacred Hoop: West: sunset-fall-black-cup and bow-thunderbird-old age.

The third cycle is that of the setting sun: the back begins to slump, the teeth yellow, and time shows its wrinkled passage on the face. This is the arc of the thunderbird which comes from the west and brings rain. The main function of the elderly in Indian society is that of a teacher and storyteller. These narrators are true rainbringers, for their stories quench a thirst for knowledge in a desert of white imposed ignorance.

It is for this reason that these books were written:

> The sun was near to setting when Black Elk said [to Neihardt]: "There is so much to teach you. What I know was given to me for men and it is true and it is beautiful. Soon I will be under the grass and it will be lost. You were sent to save it, and you must come back so that I can teach you." (xix)

The cup and the bow that Black Elk then wielded were the cup of knowledge and the bow of wisdom. Black Elk realized that if the story of his people was not preserved, it would be forever lost. Without his story, there would be

no Indian perspective on the defeat of Custer; there would be no massacre at Wounded Knee, just the battle. His story is the literary ghost dance: "I thought them on the wrong road now, but maybe they could be brought back into the hoop again and to the good road" (239). He said this in reference to the ghost dance, but it was the telling of his story, his remembrance of the old ways, which helped to accomplish the return to the good road.

Ignatia Broker's story is much the same: "My grandchildren: I am glad that you, the young Ojibwa of today, are seeking to learn the beliefs, the customs, and the practices of our people, for these things have too long been alive only in the memories of the old ones" (8). These words, near the beginning of the narrative, are spoken in response to the very end of the novel, as the sad Oona believes that all of the Ojibwa young have not forgotten the ways of their ancestors, but even worse, they have never even bothered to learn them. But on the last page of the narrative, a child comes seeking these ancient ways, and through this act the book goes through the full circle.

Black Elk Speaks and *Night Flying Woman* are teaching materials in that they speak of the old ways and traditions of Native Americans and reveal how the whites stole from them and therefore are not to be trusted. In this way, these books explain to Indians how they came to be in the cultural predicament they are in; *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions* tells them what to do about it. He does not want every Indian to live their lives in a drunken state, revolt against every aspect of white society, and eat raw deer livers. He wants them, and the youth of other dissatisfied races, to question the environment they live in, to join together, and to fight for what they know is right. He feels that they are doing this:

I guess it was not time for this to happen, but it is

> coming back, I feel it warming in my bones. Not the Old Ghost dance, not the rolling up--but a new-old spirit, not only among Indians but also among whites and blacks, too, especially among young people. It is like the raindrops making a tiny brook, many brooks making a stream, many streams making one big river bursting all the dams. *Us making this book, talking like this -- these are some of the rain drops.*" (Lame Deer 113)

Lame Deer uses his book to dispel many of the stereotypes and misconceptions that non-Indians have about Indians. This book is the truth about Indians, and it is told in modern language. Although it is bitter, it is just the truth, and that is often bitter for whites to swallow.

The Sacred Hoop: North: darkness-winter-white-healing herb-goose-death.

The last arc of the sacred hoop can be looked at as the beginning of the end or the beginning of the rebirth. It is darkness, but it is white. It is death, but its physical symbol is the healing herb. It must be seen as both the end of one cycle and the beginning of the next: "These years were filled with love and laughter and this cycle was the cycle of life of our people, the Ojibway" (Broker 17). This cycle could not be broken as long as the trees stood. For

> the trees, as long as they stand, will give shelter to the Anishinabe and the Animal Brothers. They are a gift. As long as the Ojibway are beneath, the trees will murmur with contentment. When the Ojibway are gone, the forest will weep and this will be reflected in the sound of the si-si-gwa-d. (33)

But it was the cycle which was broken later in the book.

The white man had driven the Ojibway from the land in order to rip down the trees for lumber. Oona's parents were dead, and it seemed that she was losing all she had ever known: "Oona sat and dreamed. She saw Father and Mother smiling beside the lodges in the rainy country. *The circle was around them.* When Oona awoke, she heard the si-si-gwa-d. It had a weeping sound" (105). The significance of this passage is twofold. First, her parents, through death, have rejoined the circle. Ironically, in the same passage it seems as if the circle of this world was broken because of the destruction of the forest. But that part of the circle is experiencing a rebirth today. Environmental awareness is rising; we just have to hope that it's not too late. But the cyclical nature of Ojibway ideology that was expressed in the preceding passages is best summarized through Oona's own words:

> We believe in the circle of life. We believe all returns to its source; that both good and bad return to the place where they began. We believe that if we start a deed, after the fullness of time it will return to us, the source of the journey. If care is not used when the circle is begun, then the hurts along the way will be received in the end. Such is the belief of the true Ojibway. (56)

This is the literary statement of the Ojibway's interpretation of the sacred hoop. This passage is also a warning to the white man, who stole the Ojibway land. If the hurts are to be received in the end of a circle with a bad beginning, the white race of America is in a bad way.

Black Elk saw this coming of destruction in his great vision. But he also saw, and fully realized with the writing of his book, the mending of the nation's hoop. But there is circularity in more than just the symbolic language of the great vision. The sacred hoop is a part of the Sioux

language. Where whites have sterile names for months of the year, the Sioux months are alive with the seasons:

January-Moon of Frost in the Tepee
February-Moon of the Dark Red Calf
March-Moon of the Snowblindness
April-Moon of Red Grass Appearing
May-Moon when Ponies Shed
June-Moon of Making Fat
July-Moon of the Red Cherries
August-Moon when the Cherries Turn Black or When the Calf Grows Hair
September-Moon when the Plumbs Are Scarlet or of the Black Calf
October-Moon of the Changing Seasons
November-Moon of the Falling Leaves
December-Moon of the Popping Trees

Even the last month of the year, December, the one that whites might associate with the north, darkness, and even death, is one that is alive with popping trees. In this way the circle is alive with more than just color and symbols; the sacred hoop is alive in the language. This is one of the reasons why the white educational methods of the early 1900's were almost irreversibly detrimental. If the Indians had totally forgotten their language, this would be yet another shattering of the sacred hoop by the whites. Unfortunately, the list of atrocities, and therefore the struggle, goes on.

But Lame Deer shows us how he was resilient against the white man, how he fought to retain his identity as a Native American. Others weren't so lucky. They fought in the useless wars of the white man. They died for him, and for what? Freedom? No. They died for enslavement, restriction, and reservations. But how can whites make up for their wrongs? Will it be through mere apologies and

consciousness easing financial pittances? After these are given, do we then leave the Indians to their own problems which were caused by our ignorance and greed?

No, it is as Lame Deer says. We must all be part of the mending process. The whites caused this pain, so we should be the ones who aid in putting it right again. Perhaps the study of these books, the writing of this essay, even the very reading of these words are all part of the mending process, because with this knowledge we are all responsible. We must all be a part of "the one big river bursting all the dams." We must be the river of information, of learning, bursting the dams of misinformation and ignorance. Perhaps then the sacred hoop may be whole again.

The sacred hoop: East: daybreak-spring-red-peace pipe-buffalo-birth. South: noon-summer-yellow-flowering stick-elk-maturity. West: sunset-fall-black-cup and bow-thunderbird-old age. North: darkness-winter-white-healing herb-goose-re-birth. The sacred hoop.

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Habermas and Lyotard as a Means of Reading the Cultural Conflict in Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*

Michael Peacock

The conflict between European and Native American culture dates back to initial contact between the inhabitants of the two continents. While Euro-Americans have tried to exert influence upon the Indians, they, in reaction, have desperately struggled to preserve their way of life. In Native American author N. Scott Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn* this familiar conflict surfaces as a young Pueblo man returns from WWII and finds it difficult to relate again to his culture. As a result of this trouble, he discovers, ironically, that he cannot communicate within the oral tradition of his culture.

The root of this conflict rests deeper than the obvious differences between ways of life and custom. In his book on social theory, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol.I: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Jurgen Habermas addresses some of these issues by drawing attention to linguistics and the fundamental understandings of both narrative and scientific cultures. His discussion of the theory of communicative reason offers a very plausible explanation for the troubles of Momaday's protagonist,

Abel. Jean-Francois Lyotard, a French philosopher and writer, also addresses these issues in his works *The Post-Modern Condition, Just Gaming,* and *The Differend*, but his ideas can be seen as comments on and direct arguments against the answers Habermas has to offer the reader of Momaday's novel. The theories of Habermas and Lyotard, when read in the context of *House Made of Dawn* and Abel's situation, not only supply some answers to his problems, but also serve to guide the reader through Abel's ordeal as he comes to terms with his culture.

Habermas believes that communicative rationality is necessary for effective communication. He says:

> an assertion can be called rational only if the speaker satisfies the conditions necessary to achieve the illocutionary goal of reaching an understanding about something in the world with at least one other participant in communication. (11)

That is, people in a society must be able to argue with one another about their interpretations of the world. In this way people will rationally reach truths about the world that they might not have considered before presenting them in argument form. For one to argue, questions about the validity of certain issues must be raised. These "validity claims" serve as a springboard for argumentation; once these claims have been presented, they can be determined to be either true or false.

Habermas contends that while scientific cultures can easily raise validity claims about their beliefs, mythic cultures cannot. For a validity claim to be raised, one must be able to separate and draw a distinction between one's worldview and the world, between one's interpretation and/or understanding of the world and the world that is interpreted and/or understood. For mythic cultures, there is no such distinction. The inseparable

nature of the mythic culture's world and worldview as distinguishable from the separation of the world from the worldview in the white, European, world is best illustrated in the following example.

In light of religion, Native American spiritual beliefs are very closely intertwined with their culture and their understanding of the world. In European or predominately Christian culture the social basis and understanding of the world are not so closely related. In European culture, it is generally accepted that a person can survive on earth and in "this life" without religion. That is, if someone rejects religion, they will still be able to function in the world. This involves a recognition that the world is not identical to any particular worldview and is open to different interpretations. A Native American, however, is unable to draw this distinction because, as Habermas alleges, "in archaic societies myths fulfill the unifying function of worldviews in an exemplary way--they permeate life practice" (44). He continues, "mythic worldviews prevent us from categorially uncoupling nature and culture" (51). If a Native American picks up a rock and even for a moment wonders if it actually does contain powerful spirits or doubts that they are there, as a nature worshipper whose culture and lifestyle is based on such beliefs, his/her world will be effectively ruined. That is, if the worldview is altered or, more importantly, questioned, then the world as he/she understands it is wholly destroyed.

Without the ability to raise these validity claims, according to Habermas, no step can be made toward communicative reason. To say that narrative cultures have no ability to raise validity is not to say that they do not have the ability to think critically. One who lives in and believes in a mythic culture is certainly capable of understanding truth and falsity. They can understand

honesty and lies and can be innovative technologically. However, Habermas believes that members of such a culture are not able to think rationally about their own culture and that they are not capable of understanding another interpretation of the world and of their beliefs. Because of the inseparability of their world and of their worldview, he says, they cannot think critically about or deny their fundamental beliefs. This means that they are unable to be rational about belief because they are unable to understand it as a belief which is fallible and subject to criticism.

Habermas's theory may help to explain Abel's situation in *House Made of Dawn*. Not only has his culture been quite literally invaded and forced to consider the European perspective, but Abel himself, after being exposed to white culture during the war, finds himself separated from his own culture. When pushed into a culture where beliefs and worldviews are constantly being challenged and questioned, he finds that his world and worldview have been separated. This separation is dramatically symbolized as Abel remembers a moment from the war when an enemy tank comes over a ridge:

> ...he saw the machine. It rose up behind the hill, black and massive, looming there in front of the sun. He saw it swell, deepen, and take shape on the skyline, as if it were some upheaval of earth, the eruption of stone and eclipse, and all about it the glare, the cold perimeter of light...For a moment it seemed apart from the land; its great iron hull lay out against the timber and the sky, and the center of its weight hung away from the ridge. Then it came crashing down to the grade, slow as a waterfall, thunderous, surpassing impact, *nestling* almost into the splash and boil of debris. He was shaking

> violently, and the machine bore down upon him, came close, and passed him by. (Momaday 25)

This sequence in which the tank imposes itself on the skyline, razing the landscape as it lumbers across, symbolizes the violence of the separation of Abel's world and worldview. Even as the tank passes Abel without physically harming him, it has torn through his beliefs leaving deep scars and plunderous tracks. Once he has made the distinction between his world and his beliefs it is very difficult for him to accept his beliefs rationally.

Abel seems to reflect Habermas's insistence that someone in his situation cannot live in the culture of his birth after having experienced the scientific reason of the white world. Habermas maintains that "the demythologization of worldviews means the desocialization of nature and the denaturalization of society" (48). With this realization that his world has been effectively crushed and that he cannot accept what he has learned all of his life, his isolation seems complete. Abel's plight is described in *House Made of Dawn* as a forfeiture of his niche. Momaday says, "He had lost his place. He had been long ago at the center, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the end of the earth, was even now reeling on the edge of the void" (104). Unable to relate to his own customs he find himself symbolically caught in the trap set by Habermas's dichotomizing theory.

The novel, in relation to this theory presented by Habermas, is about Abel's problems with communication and about his struggle to come to terms with his knowledge of both worlds and worldviews. As the rift between him and his native culture develops Abel falls silent, "not dumb...but *inarticulate*" (58). This silence and inability to communicate represent his inability to function in the tradition in which he was raised. His inability to function

appears in the form of silence because his culture is oral in its tradition.

Although the text of *House Made of Dawn* supports his theory of communicative reason, Habermas, in concluding that mythic cultures are ruined by the presence of scientific or "rational" ones, is treating them with bias. The separation of world and worldview, he would say, that exists in the latter would cause a culture based on myth and oral tradition to fall apart if it were introduced. He means that it would fall apart not in the sense that it would cease to be a culture but that it could not continue as it had before; that it would "develop." In relation to the novel, Abel, upon exposure to white culture, is alienated from his own. He, according to Habermas, has reached this point from which he cannot continue in the tradition of his birth. Also Abel is "unable" to fit into white culture. However, Lyotard's understanding of mythic cultures may offer particularly pertinent insight into Habermas's theory and explain Abel's means of escape from his predicament.

Lyotard would argue that there is no justice in trying to judge the mythic culture in relationship to the scientific one. There is not only a multiplicity of lifeworlds (as Habermas did acknowledge), but also of language games, as Lyotard calls them. He expands his description, stating that "there are many different language games--a heterogeneity of elements" (xxiv). Further, because these language games are heterogeneous, not all follow the same (or even similar) rules. In the same way that one cannot play (or, more appropriately, referee) lacrosse by using the rules that govern chess, one cannot expect to play the language game of an oral tradition by the rules of a scientific one and preserve the integrity of the former.

In *The Differend*, Lyotard addresses an even more complex issue. He points out that not only is there a

problem in the varying rules of separate language games but also in the way they relate to each other. He introduces the term "differend" to delineate this problem. Lyotard thus begins the preface to *The Differend*:

> As distinguished from a litigation, a differend would be a case of conflict between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgement to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule). (xi)

This theory presents an explanation for Abel's frustration. According to Habermas, a narrative culture cannot be rational as it has no separation of world and worldview. Abel's silence is forced due to the differend that separates the EuroAmerican and Native American cultures. This is called a differend because there is no place for a fair litigation. There is a fundamental difference between a litigation and a differend. In the instance of a litigation, two groups argue according to a set of rules to which they both agree however, in the instance of a differend the two groups do not share the same rules of litigation so none is possible. In his theory of communicative reason Habermas demands that validity claims be raised so that communicative rationality be possible. However, neither validity claims nor communicative reason have a place in oral traditions. The differend is the result of Habermas's insistence that narrative cultures must justify themselves in European terms. This, of course, is impossible in that its value cannot be justified in any language game but that of the Native American.

When Abel was exposed to white culture as a WWII soldier he saw the difficulty to which Habermas alludes. Abel was presented with a differend and also with what Lyotard calls, in *Just Gaming*, *pleonexia*. This occurs "when a language game begins to regulate games that are not the same as itself" (Loytard 99). Abel's silence occurs when he is confronted with the separation of world and worldview that is unavoidable in the world of science. He is unable to justify his Native American beliefs in light of his new experience with rationality. Not only is he unable to justify these beliefs, but he is unable to even voice any defense of them because to do so he would have to enter a language game in which he could not operate and does not understand. Lyotard says that one caught in Abel's predicament is "divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim" (*Differend* 9). Without a voice, Abel falls silent.

Pleonexia is manifested in the novel, *House Made of Dawn*, when Abel is tried for the murder of an albino. The differend becomes evident when Father Olguin, a white priest who knows Abel, tells the court that "in his [Abel's] own mind it was not a man he killed. It was something else." Abel believes the man to be an "evil spirit" that was justly killed (*Momaday* 101). Olguin continues defining the nature of the differend, saying, "I believe that this man was moved to do what he did by an act of imagination so compelling as to be inconceivable to us." Here, the white lawyers and the court commit *pleonexia* when they disregard the differend. "Yes, yes, yes" they say:

> But these are the facts: he killed a man--took the life of another human being. He did this of his own volition--he has admitted that--he was armed for no other reason. He committed a brutal and premeditated

> act which we have no choice but to call by its right name. (102)

Olguin argues, "Homicide is a legal term, but the law is not my context; and certainly isn't his--" (102). Momaday notes what is taking place as he describes the situation, "when he had told his story once, simply, Abel refused to speak. . . . Word by word by word these men were disposing of him in a language, *their* language, and they were making a bad job of it" (102). Abel is helpless in his situation and has no defense against the white men who are forcing him to engage in their language game.

However, in light of Lyotard's revelations that language games are heterogeneous in nature, that rules vary from game to game, and that *pleonexia* is occurring in Habermas's theory, there appears for Abel a way out of his plight. After being freed of the impossible task of justifying his culture in white people's terms he can focus on the value of the narrative tradition of which he is a part as it relates to itself under its own rules.

Lyotard also analyzes the value of narrative in *Just Gaming* and *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Lyotard insightfully points out that the importance of narrative in such a tradition does *not* lie in whether or not it is valid, that is, whether or not it is true that the events in the story or tale really occurred and can be proved. Instead, he realizes that the value of the narrative is its ability to bring members in. The bringing "in" is to initiate them in some way, to make them a part of the tradition. By referring to the Cashinhua, a South American Indian tribe from the upper Amazon, Lyotard points out these qualities of narrative. He notes that, "the narrator's only claim to competence for telling the story is the fact that he has heard it himself. The current narratee gains potential access to the same authority simply by

listening" (*Post* 20). The exposure to the culture through narrative is its value. He continues, "it [the oral tradition] finds the raw material for its social bond not only in the meaning of the narratives it recounts, but also in the act of reciting them" (22). When he talks about the significance of oral tradition not lying in its validity, Lyotard goes one step further by recognizing, with another example from Cashinahuan culture, that even the words of the narrative are less important than the rhythm that permeates it. He notes:

> Narrative form follows a rhythm; it is the synthesis of the meter beating time in regular periods and of accent modifying the length or amplitude of certain of those periods. This vibratory, musical property of narrative is clearly revealed in the ritual performance of certain Cashinahuan tales: they are handed down in initiation ceremonies, in absolutely fixed form, in a language whose meaning is obscured by lexical and syntactic anomalies, and they are sung as indeterminable monotonous chants. (21)

In light of Lyotard's ideas and revelations about the importance of oral tradition, Abel is not at such a loss. He was told stories as a child that he remembers in adulthood, and in one passage Abel's thoughts reveal a kinship to narrative that closely parallels what Lyotard reports about sound and rhythm. Abel remembers "the prayer, and he knew what it meant--not the words, which he had never really heard, but the low sound itself, rising and falling far away in his mind, unmistakable and unbroken" (Momaday 13). Narrative has been extremely effective as a vehicle for drawing him into the realm of the oral tradition. It is the prayer and its "meaning," not the words of the prayer, that bind Abel to his culture. It is the hypnotic rhythm that he recalls so vividly and that is what is necessary for him

to make a connection with his tradition.

Although Abel, throughout much of *House Made of Dawn*, does seem to be alienated from his world, the rift between him and his culture is closed by the end of the book. The solution to his problem is to realize that the heterogeneity of language games exists, that he is not required to justify his culture to the white way of thinking, and that he must re-enter his tradition by accepting it for the value it has to his language game. When he returns to ritual the bond to his culture is mended. Abel's re-entry appears on the last page of *House Made of Dawn* when, after dressing his grandfather's corpse for burial, he runs the ceremonial race of the dead. After beginning the healing process between him and his original beliefs by engaging in ritual, he has only one more thing to do. Momaday writes, "He was running, and under his breath he began to sing..." (212).

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The Debt Crisis and Development in Latin America: Are Debt for Nature Swaps an Answer?

Chip Trimmier

Welcome to the '90s. This is a world where nothing stays secret for long. No part of the world is so remote or perilous that a CNN crew can't do a live broadcast announcing to the world that "*this* is what is happening. Stand up and be outraged." The public can receive easily digestible information on their cable TV sets for as long as they can take it. We learn about world issues; we relate them in our discussions. We talk about "The Debt," and a growing environmental consciousness has finally entered mainstream thought. These problems are perceived to be among the most pressing in our nation today.

As bad as they are here, the problems of debt and environmental degradation are all the more pressing in the developing countries. The U.S. national debt is measured in the trillions of dollars. This may make a developing country's debt accumulation seem small in comparison. However, these states lack the economic power to absorb and manage the huge debt that they have accumulated in their quest for development. Because of this, short-term profits may be seen as a necessary goal to meet payments on the accumulating debt. Short term goals neglect long-

term planning. In the hustle for quick economic gains, environmental resources are often destroyed in order to maximize immediate profit. Unfortunately, the destruction may be permanent. More environmentally sound development seems to be far more profitable in the long term.

This paper attempts to discuss not only the ecological arguments of why the biospheres of Latin America should be protected but also the economic arguments. Debt for nature swaps and other environmental policies tied to debt are examined as a means for achieving ecological protection in the developing countries of Latin America. A discussion of the effects of these arrangements and policies on the politics of the region is mandatory for a full understanding of the situation. Finally, an assessment of what must be done to stabilize the future of the Latin American rain forest will be offered.

Within the past decade, certain ecological phenomena have become the topics of commonplace discussion. "Global warming" and the "greenhouse effect" are in the vocabularies even of school children in modern America. The slow increase in average global temperature has been predicted for some time, and some scientists have declared that it has already begun. The global warming trend is caused by a change in the gaseous composition of the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide and methane are the principal greenhouse gasses. As the percentage of greenhouse gasses increases, the average global temperature slowly responds as a result of the extra energy trapped by the atmosphere, according to this theory. This is the greenhouse effect. As the average global temperature rises, large amounts of water now stored in the polar ice caps will be released, raising the sea level by as much as two meters according to some predictions. There are serious consequences of this

problem, especially for coastal cities. This could flood low-lying cities such as New Orleans and huge areas such as the Kingdom of the Netherlands without the protection of incredibly expensive engineering projects.

The process of deforestation makes a two-fold contribution to the process of global warming. Large amounts of greenhouse gasses are being released into the atmosphere as a result of deforestation. As forests are cleared, the timber that is not used is either burned or left to rot. Both processes release greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. The forests are the principle recyclers of carbon dioxide into oxygen through photosynthesis. As the forests decline, so does the planet's ability to extract greenhouse gas from the atmosphere. After the trees are gone, the soil is usually too poor to support crops. Additionally, the added erosion clogs reservoirs and irrigation systems downstream, causing the need for additional capital investment.

Most of the forests are already gone from the industrialized nations. According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, one half of the globe's forests have disappeared since 1950 (Hamlin 1066). The Third World remains as the largest store of standing forest on the planet. One third of the entire world's remaining rain forest is in Brazil. Amazônia contains one fifth of all the bird species in the world, and in its rivers swim eight times as many species as in the Mississippi and its tributaries. This rich biodiversity has led conservationists to concentrate on protecting this tropical ecosystem in lieu of individual species ("Costing" 19). The combination of all of these environmental issues has pointed to one conclusion for environmentalists: the rain forest must be preserved.[1]

Another phenomenon that became painfully apparent

during the '80s was that the debt crisis had reached ludicrous proportions in Latin America and in the third world in general. The debt crisis began with the huge oil revenues of OPEC countries being deposited in industrialized countries' banks flooded with funds. The banks made many large and often poorly researched loans. In the early eighties, the industrial nations tightened money supplies to fight inflation. For the large debtor countries of Latin America, the foreign currency needed to repay the loans became more expensive, and interest rates rose. The debt problem became almost impossible to resolve. Because many loans were made at variable interest, debt payments increased exponentially due to this two-fold dilemma. By 1987, Brazil's national debt had become the equivalent of 34% of its GNP (Durning 35). It is not uncommon for 25% of a Latin American country's annual budget to be allocated to debt servicing. However, even with this sizeable share of the budget, the debt continues to grow. This was cause for extreme concern in the interest of world economics. A default of one or a few of these countries could lead to the bankruptcy of some of the world's biggest banks (Sweezy 1).

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are two Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) that lend money to developing countries. They are lenders of last resort, handing out money for projects that are ideally designed to promote economic recovery when no commercial bank will take the risk of loan failure. These MDBs, along with others, inserted new money into the region and helped to reschedule debt payments. Although helpful in the short term, the process sent the affected countries "further down the road to debt enslavement" (Sweezy 2). The IMF tended to view the problem as short-term, leading it to encourage more external borrowing

rather than interest relief and internal austerity measures rather than a plan that could lead to economic growth (Kuczynski 120).

When the IMF lends money to these debtor nations, it engages in what is called *high-conditionality lending*. In other words, there are several conditions that must be met in order for the country to receive the money. Common measures are cutting imports, reducing public spending, wage indexing, and enacting strict monetary policies aimed at combating inflation. However, the effectiveness of these measures has been limited (Sachs 275). Also, leaders of developing nations have charged that these conditions "inhibit flexibility in meeting developmental aims, impede growth, undermine stability and represent an incursion on sovereign powers" (Carvounis 69). Many Latin American authors are very critical of the IMF as being a North-dominated institution that unnecessarily imposes costly stabilization programs (Feinberg 4).[2] However, many still argue that the economic cost of adjustment has been exaggerated (Lomax 125). Still, suggestions that constitutional changes need to be made to achieve economic reform, such as that from José Fajgenbaum, the *former* head of the IMF negotiating team in Brazil, fuel anger towards this institution ("Brazil's Tiff"). Upon hearing Fajgenbaum's comment, Brazilian President Collor de Mello promptly requested and obtained the Argentine-born negotiator's recall ("IMF Bows"). The opposition of Latin American countries to the austerity measures and failure of the measures to produce significant results caused the world's economists to do some rethinking.

Recently formulated plans attempt to address the problem of obtaining real results and seem to be making some progress. In 1988, six debtor nations obtained more than 4% positive economic growth (Rohr 196). This is the

result of a new approach voiced by the Baker and Brady plans. The Baker plan was unveiled by United States Treasury Secretary James Baker in 1985. The premise of the plan is that sustained economic growth, not IMF-imposed austerity, offers the only hope of an improvement in the situation (Pastor 45). The Brady plan retains this premise and strengthens the strategy. The first point of the plan is that debtor nations must encourage confidence in foreign and domestic investors to stimulate the economy. Second, the creditor community must provide sufficient and timely support to facilitate economic growth.[3]

Debt-equity swaps began to be utilized as a means to reduce the banks' loan exposure, turning unproductive loans into equity investments. In a debt-equity swap, the country is allowed to pay the debt in its own currency. This payment is then invested in national industry. However, there are several problems with this exchange. First, it is an inflationary practice. Since hard currency is not demanded, the country does not need to devote any actual income to debt servicing. The payment can be made with cash hot off the press, increasing the money supply and causing inflation. The loss of the value of the money as it is reinvested in the country is taken as a loss by the bank. Secondly, the investment typically is made in the best capital resources of the country. Therefore, the best resources of the country for further economic progress are bought off by foreign investors. This "capital flight" can slow the country's already treacherous climb out of a debt emergency.

An aberration of the debt-equity swap was first proposed by Dr. Tom Lovejoy in an October 1984 *New York Times* article. The idea came to him while he was participating in congressional hearings discussing the relationship between the debt crisis and environmental

decline (Sun 1175). The idea led to what has been called the debt-for-nature swap. The mechanics of a debt-nature swap are similar to those of debt-equity. The debt of a country with sizeable commercial debt is likely to be partially for sale on the secondary market. A private, international conservation agency purchases this debt at a steep discount. After obtaining the debt, the organization approaches the debtor country with a proposal to set aside some area of land for protection. The agreements eventually negotiated are unique to the circumstances of the country but usually have some common elements. The international organization is made a formal part of the administration agency as technical advisor. Local environmental groups are brought into the process as well and may take the leading role as administrators and overseers. A fund is established to cover the expenses of the implementation and operation of the project.

Conservation International (CI) reached an agreement of this sort with the government of Bolivia on July 13, 1987. CI purchased $650,000 of Bolivian debt at a rate of 15 cents on the dollar from a single Swiss bank.[4] The right to repayment of the debt was waived in return for the promise to preserve 3.7 million acres in the Bolivian *llano,* or lowland plain, adjacent to the already-existing 1/3-million-acre Beni Biosphere Reserve. CI was made a party to the administration of all protected lands, and a $250,000 fund was set aside for administrative costs, with $150,000 coming from the U.S. Agency for International Development (US-AID). This agreement created a four-million acre "buffer zone" around an already existing preserve. The buffer zone could be utilized for economic purposes under a policy of sustainable development. The increased area under protection is important in light of discoveries arising from the ongoing Minimum Critical

Size of Ecosystems (MCSE) project in progress in the Brazilian Amazon basin near Manaus.[5] Fragments of rain forest undergo changes at their perimeter: trees die, and bird and butterfly populations decline. What this "edge effect" shows is that the acreage necessary to preserve an area's biodiversity may be larger than previously thought (Sun 1175).

The Bolivian agreement broke the ground for a similar agreement with Ecuador. On December 14, 1987, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) finalized a one million-dollar debt-nature swap with a slightly more complex procedure. The WWF purchased $1 million in debt from a group of commercial banks. The debt was exchanged for Ecuadorian bonds repayable in Ecuadorian *sucres*. The bonds were donated to a local environmental group, Fundaciòn Natura. WWF and the government of Ecuador agreed to allow Fundaciòn Natura to use payment on these bonds to preserve undeveloped land. In April, WWF and The Nature Conservancy announced that another $9 million swap had been arranged under the same terms. The Ecuadorian debt-nature swap differs from Bolivia's in that the emphasis is on *complete undevelopment* rather than sustainable development. This plan, as the name implies, provides for reserving the land in its natural state to be protected from any development. Certainly, a plot of land is ecologically more valuable if it is free from human encroachment. The value of sustainable development is that it allows for use of the raw materials extractable from a plot of land while preserving a great degree of its biodiversity.

The CI and WWF debt-nature swaps have several very beneficial outcomes. The swaps both reduce the debt of the debtor country and provide assistance in the long-term management of resources. However, as a proportion of the

overall debt, the swaps are fairly insignificant. Nonetheless, they enable the conservation organizations to receive the maximum return for their investment, assuming the agreements are not violated. The agreements strengthen the influence and expertise of local environmental groups by including them in the implementation and policy-making processes and by channeling funds through them (Hamlin 1071). In the WWF agreements, the local agencies are signatory parties. This is more than a symbolic relationship; creating this formal linkage between government and local environmental groups may well be the most significant accomplishment to come out of the process (1072).

The debt-nature swaps have been criticized for being weakly enforced or even for having negative outcomes, as well. Some criticize that the Bolivian "buffer zone" is being developed too much and that the 500 indigenous peoples living in the area were not taken care of. The same author complains that participation in the swap means legitimizing the system in which Western banks and governments control the resources and set the terms while third world elites "are rewarded by the North for pillaging their countries and repressing their people" (Rohr 247). Financiers have dim views of the swaps as part of a real solution because they take a loss on the deal. Still, some repayment is better than none, and the secondary debt market does exist, even though the banks would be reluctant to swap a substantial part of their debt holdings for such steeply discounted rates.

In order to provide the countries with sufficient resources while securing the future of the rain forest and related fauna, an approach integrating policies of complete undevelopment and sustained development may be most beneficial. Whether in the form of a single agreement or

in separate agreements, a combined reserve area with a core of unencroached, undeveloped rain forest surrounded by a periphery of land to be exploited under a policy of sustained development seems to be the best case scenario for all concerned. Careful administration of the protected areas will be necessary to ensure the long term success of the project.

Recently, the multinational development banks have attempted to enter the environmental arena. The World Bank has been attacked in the past for lending money for environmentally devastating, economically negligible projects. In order to address this problem, the World Bank's first environmental advisor was hired in 1969 to establish an Office of Environmental Affairs (Warford 5). Unfortunately, this did not prevent disastrous projects such as the *Polonoroeste* program of road building and agricultural colonization in the northwest Brazilian state of Rondônia. A 1980 World Bank survey concluded that the region could be successfully developed as long as the indigenous people were protected and the areas where the soil could not support agriculture were left alone. The funds were made available, but the project was not managed according to the plan ("Accounting" 72). The state of Rondônia can now be described as "completely devastated" (Waters 40). High-yield[6] projects have turned into increased loan programs, destitute people, and useless land (Hrynik 150). On May 5, 1987, World Bank President Barber Conable apologized for these travesties and promised a new outlook for the future.

Environmentally unsound projects continue to rise with the help of World Bank funds in spite of the "new outlook." Within the past few years, environmentalists rallied to defeat the Second Power Sector Loan, a proposed $500 million World Bank loan to Brazil that would

resurrect a mega-dam project with 136 new dams, many in the Amazon (Adams 47)[7]. Although the United States has made sound environmental practices a necessary condition to further funding, the World Bank has yet truly to deliver much but paper policy ("Bank Balance").

When developing countries engaging in deforestation were warned by industrialized nations that they should consider the consequences of their development, their response was an understandable one. The pervasive attitude of the developing countries was that they were going through the same process that the industrialized countries did as they were developing. These countries find it difficult to understand why they are forbidden to pursue the same policies that the major economic powers have used to develop their countries (Rendall 7). Indeed, the development of the Brazilian Amazon has been likened to the opening of the American West ("Brazil Walks"). Another important impetus behind the development of the Amazon was the doctrine of National Security. National Security arguments were extremely persuasive under the post-1964 military rule in Brazil. Amazônia represents over 50% of the Brazilian territory, is sparsely populated, and contains an unpatroled border with a history of annexation. In 1965, the first president under the military regime, General Castelo Branco, stated that "Amazonian occupation would proceed as though it were a strategically conducted war." The first post-coup body of legislation concerning the Amazon was entitled "Operation Amazonia," reflecting the military flavor of the project (Hecht 668). These projects set the tone for future attitudes about the Amazon and environmental protection.

Many critics have charged that these new environmental protection measures are "eco-colonialism" and no better than outright colonization. Ambassador

Paulo Tarso Flecha de Lima, as Secretary General of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, agrees that "this is the greatest international pressure that Brazil has ever felt in its history" ("The World"). Placing such a degree of pressure on these nations carries with it certain inherent risks:

> To link the humiliation of debt with the case for conservation risks a nationalist backlash against busybody foreigners who cut down their own trees, and then go abroad and tell poor people not to cut down theirs. (Costing 24)

Care must be taken not to shut the door on future negotiations by failing to recognize the dilemma of the present Latin American administrations.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding in Latin America about the structure of debt-nature swaps that leads to some hostility in the debtor nation. Coming in the same context as IMF austerity measures, many people see debt-nature swaps as a threat to sovereignty. Brazilian Foreign Minister Roberto Costa de Abreu Sodré told reporters that "Brazil will not see itself turned into a nature preserve for the rest of humanity. Our most important goal is economic development" ("The World"). Former Brazilian President José Sarney condemned debt-nature swaps as foreign interference ("Bravo"). Indeed, the problems in finalizing the Bolivian swap were primarily political. Press reports suggested that control of public lands had been given to an American conservation agency (Page 278). Although no title to the land changes hands, and there are no enforcement provisions contained in the agreements, a sovereignty argument still is created from the fact that a foreign agency has a great degree of control over the policy of the country, although in an extremely limited area. This is the reason that the participation of the local groups is so important.

There are many Latin American people who stand to benefit domestically from the debt-nature swaps and rain forest conservation in general. The clearing of the Amazon has led to the creation of a large sum of what Thayer Scudder, an anthropologist and World Bank consultant, terms "development refugees" (Rich 88). It is clear that the present development policy takes little account of indigenous peoples and leads to increased urban migration. This neglect could lead to serious social unrest. Logging operations often have sparked violent protest (Repetto 205). The stakes are high in the protest battle against the cattle ranchers and agricultural interests. Rubber tappers union leader Chico Mendes was murdered on December 22, 1988, as a direct result of the progress he had made in acquiring protected rain forest areas to be managed by the rubber tappers as "extractive reserves" (Rich 88). In the '60's, groups such as the Committee for Economic Development advocated clearing land for agriculture and cattle grazing because "such efforts promise high returns" (Committee 40-41). Brazil heeded this message and promoted this type of development with a system of tax credits and subsidies. As a result, these interests are strong and fighting to stay that way.

Conservation of the rain forest proves to be a much more profitable scheme than the present development path. The concept of "sustainable development" retains the countries' assets over the long term rather than burning them out in a mad race for capital.[8] The heads of three of the most prestigious scientific institutions within Amazônia--the Emilio Goeldi Museum, the Federal University of Pará, and the Centre for Agricultural Research in the Humid Tropics--all agree that "rational, sustainable development of the Amazon is the only way forward" ("Fighting"). Unfortunately, less than 0.1% of the

remaining tropical forest is being managed for sustained productivity (Repetto 205). There are many products that can be extracted from the rain forest without its destruction. However, little information on the value of standing forest reserves in Latin America is available. Indeed, "for the world's 500m [*sic.*] forest-dwellers, they are a source of food, fuel, and furniture...[but] when forest products other than trees are exported, statistics on their value are rarely collated" ("Costing" 20). Some studies do exhibit the degree to which standing rain forest is more profitable than clearing the land. Studies of the Antimari National Forest in the Brazilian state of Acre show the present per hectare revenue from rubber tapping and Brazil nut collecting to be four times as profitable as that of cattle ranching (Repetto 205). A New York Botanical Gardens study values the output of fruit, latex, and timber, on the basis of their local prices, at $9000 per hectare, as compared to less than $3000 per hectare for the production capacity of a cow pasture. Furthermore, the timber accounts for less than 10%, and this gain is erased if latex or fruit trees are killed during the logging process ("Costing" 20).

When the forestland is developed, it is often developed in an ill-conceived manner. In Brazil's process of clearing forestland by burning after extracting little timber, approximately $2.5 billion of resources are lost annually (Repetto 205). Cattle ranching in the region has been responsible for 60% of the land deforested (Leonard 113). Most of the area converted to pasture is only ephemerally productive, declining rapidly within a few years. Estimates of the area of already degraded pasture range from 20-50% (Hecht 663). Countries must be able to fully use the resources available without permanently destroying them in order to insure sustained economic growth.

Things are beginning to turn around for the environmental movement, but care must be taken to respond to the economic needs of the countries as well. Although his predecessors rejected debt-for-nature swaps outright, Brazilian President Collor de Mello has agreed to allow $100 million of debt to be swapped *per annum* ("Bravo"). He also has abolished the tax subsidies that make it profitable to deforest the Amazon for farming and ranching (Brooke). Debt-for-nature is of minimal value for debt service but could help Latin Americans toward recovery by managing resources more efficiently. Given the hostile attitude Latin American countries currently have toward IMF and World Bank lending policies, it may be infuriating to attach environmental policy requirements to the high-conditionality loans. However, the goal of these measures is to prepare a fractured economy for long-term growth in order to insure repayment, and environmental policy requirements could serve as useful guidelines for sustainable development. It is unlikely that new policy could be accepted with more reservation than the current conditions. What is left to be done is the development of markets for rain forest products. Ben & Jerry's "Rain Forest Crunch" ice cream uses Brazil nuts gathered by rubber tappers in the Amazon and donates a portion of the profits to help establish a shelling cooperative to stimulate their production.[9] Jason Clay, an anthropologist with the indigenous rights group Cultural Survival, has sent 880 pounds of rain forest samples including 45 different fruits, nuts, oils, and flours to four different companies in the United States and England. Projects to use these products may help improve the economy for the poorest and most powerless of the forest dwellers. By bypassing the local elite who control virtually all trade in forest products, more profit can be returned to ecologically sound projects aimed

at diversifying and increasing production while capturing more value locally (Christensen 96). The agricultural research station in Belém, Brazil, has worked out how to spin-dry and powder some fruits produced exclusively by the rain forest for long-term storage ("Fighting"). The development of markets for these products would solidify sustained-use options for rain forest lands. The sustainable development of rain forest resources promises to help Latin America break the chains of debt enslavement while helping to preserve the fragile ecosystems so important to the world's future.

Endnotes

1. The diversity of species must be protected for many reasons. Genetic diversity is important for agriculture and medicine. The genetic uniformity of cultivated plants makes them highly susceptible to disease and parasites. To protect the crops, plant breeders must constantly reintroduce wild varieties into the domesticated strains. Plants are commonly used in medications. Almost half of all prescriptions dispensed in the U.S. contain natural substances, and over 50% of these contain a plant-derived active ingredient. *See:* Plotkin, at 211.

2. Although directly discussed on this page, this attitude is evidenced throughout the book. The book is a compilation of works prepared for the Working Group on Economics of the Inter-American Dialogue by Latin American authors. The papers were presented and discussed in a 1986 seminar held in Santiago, Chile, at the Corporaciòn de Investigaciones Econòmicas para América Latina (CIEPLAN). *See also:* Wionczek, Miguel. *Politics and Economics of External Debt Crisis.*

3. Obviously, this is an incredibly simplified summary. For the first point, Brady calls for debtor nations to focus on adopting policies that encourage new investment, strengthen domestic savings, and promote the return of flight capital. The confidence of investors is crucial to these goals. For the second point, Brady advocates the cooperation of commercial banks and debtor countries "to provide a broader range of alternatives for financial support, including greater efforts to achieve both debt and debt service reduction and to provide new lending." *See:* Rohr, at 197 and 198.

4. The market rates on Bolivian debt were at the time fluctuating between 7 and 25 cents on the dollar. *See* Hamlin, p. 1069.

5. The Minimum Critical Size of Ecosystems (MCSE) Project is a 20-year study that was initiated in 1980 by Dr. Tom Lovejoy. The project aims at discovering the conditions necessary to sustain the ecological diversity of a piece of land. There is a debate as to the best strategy for preserving biological diversity between the "one-chunk" theories and the "numerous plots" theories. The patchwork of small and large plots created by development of the Amazon in Brazil is an excellent situation for testing these theories.

6. "High yield" projects are designed to maximize return on the investment. They are often poorly planned and less sound than the other projects. They are usually short term because the natural resources they depend on are depleted faster than they can regenerate.

7. It is worth mentioning here that hydropower, although a non-polluting source of energy, is *not* environmentally friendly. Hydropower poses a serious environmental threat to surrounding areas. The building of dams and reservoirs contributes to species decline and extinction as well as deforestation. The deforestation is easy to see: where there used to be great expanses of trees, there are now great expanses of water. The decline of species, not just aquatic, occurs due to what is called habitat fragmentation. According to the equilibrium theory of island biogeography, the sum total of habitat without interruption is what determines the number of species that can live on it. In other words, a piece of

land the size of Cuba in the rain forest can support an exponentially larger number of species than can an undeveloped island the size of Cuba. The building of a dam and reservoir which supplies a puny amount of electricity for a power plant of its size (one must count the area of the reservoir as part of the plant, after all) can separate habitats by many miles. Flighted species may still interbreed, but certainly no land creature will go fifty or a hundred miles around the perimeter of a small reservoir to mingle with the others that used to be only a mile or two away. Of course, it is obvious that the fish upstream and downstream no longer can breed with one another. Another problem to take into consideration is the amount of stress put on species downstream due to erratic flow and excessive turbidity during the time of construction. In addition to the outright elimination of habitat, the future continuation of species in the area of the entire river basin is threatened due to stresses on breeding. For more information, see Lester R. Brown, *Ed., The State of the World 1988.*

8. For more information on "sustainable development," *see:* World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future.* Also known as the "Brundtland Commission" after its chairman, the Prime Minister of Norway, the commission was established in 1983 by the United Nations.

9. For more information, write Ben & Jerry's Homemade, P.O. Box 240, Waterbury, VT, 05676.

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Gender Issues Section

Each year, *Southern Academic Review* receives many outstanding submissions from a wide range of disciplines. This year, several students submitted articles which deal with gender issues in literature and political theory. The staff decided to combine three of these submissions into a separate section of the journal, as gender issues are much a part of classroom discussion on the Birmingham-Southern campus.

The Varying Characterizations of Women in *A Doll's House* and *Death of a Salesman*

Molly Brewer

The influence that the past exerts over the present is often overwhelming, and this type of influence is felt in drama as in other genres. Socially conscious playwright Henrik Ibsen affected the works of Arthur Miller, whose plays were put into production over 30 years after Ibsen's death. Miller himself acknowledged Ibsen's influence in an interview with Ronald Hayman, which is recorded in Hayman's book titled *Arthur Miller*. He said, "What [Ibsen] gave me in the beginning was a sense of the past and a sense of the rootedness of everything that happens" (Hayman 6). David Thomas, a lecturer in drama at the University of Bristol, acknowledges Ibsen's sphere of influence over at least two of Miller's plays. Thomas writes that *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* "owe a clear thematic debt to Ibsen's work" (160). Although both *A Doll's House* by Ibsen and *Death of a Salesman* by Miller reveal an awareness of social problems on the part of the playwrights, their treatment of the main women characters in the two plays varies. While Ibsen boldly moves to make his protagonist and hero a woman, Miller marginalizes his main female character and does not

develop her through the course of the play.

Nora, the main female character of *A Doll's House* is considered by Carolyn Heilbrun to be the premier female hero in drama. In her book *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, Heilbrun writes, "The birth of the woman as hero occurred, insofar as one may date such an event, in 1880, when almost at the same moment Ibsen and James invented her" (49). Nora's character develops throughout *A Doll's House* and becomes a separate and independent entity from her husband, Torvald, by the end of the play. By giving up all that has been important to her and by denouncing the role that has been defined for her in nineteenth-century society, that of the nurturing mother and wife, Nora is revitalized and "born again" to be an individual as well as a woman.

In *Death of a Salesman*, the sole woman characterized by Miller is Linda, Willy Loman's wife. Linda is characterized only by her relation to Willy, and in direct contrast to Ibsen's Nora, she does not develop into her own person. Critic Irving Jacobson, in his essay "Family Dreams in *Death of a Salesman*," comments on Linda's inability to change or influence her family. He writes,

> She can play no significant role in her husband's dreams; and although she proves occasionally capable of dramatic outbursts, she lacks the imagination and strength to hold her family together or to help Loman define a new life without grandiose hopes for Biff. (51)

Miller focuses only on the male characters of the play. While Nora embodies change and moves through the course of *A Doll's House* toward a recognition of herself as a person, Linda remains static and helps to perpetuate Willy's fantasy as reality. Both of the characters live in a society in which the existing norms for women are

inequitable when compared to those for men, but only Nora acts to break away from her husband and from society's expectations of her as a woman. Nora moves toward self-actualization, a concept of which Linda does not seem to be aware.

Despite the varying ways in which Ibsen and Miller treat their women characters, similarities exist in the settings of the worlds in which Nora and Linda find themselves. Both are plagued with husbands who do not realize the women's potential to be individuals. Nora's husband, Torvald, is flawed by his egocentricity. In the first scene of the play, the reader recognizes how little attention Torvald pays to Nora and also how little he respects her individual choices. Throughout the play, Torvald seems concerned only with Nora's taking care of their family and domestic matters; he does not think that she is capable of thinking critically for herself. Not only does he constantly call her by "pet" names, but he also prohibits her from eating macaroons and other candies and pastries. Torvald's opinion of Nora is well characterized in the opening scene during an exchange that occurs between them. Torvald says, "The squanderbird's a pretty little creature, but she gets through an awful lot of money. It's incredible what an expensive pet she is for a man to keep" (Ibsen 372). Torvald's reference to Nora as a "pet for a man" is significant to the play as a whole, as well as to Torvald's characterization.

Miller characterizes Willy, Linda's husband and the main character of *Death of a Salesman*, in a way similar to how Ibsen characterizes Torvald. Like Torvald, Willy wants to advance in society and is very concerned with keeping the status quo. He cannot realize that the salesman's world has changed and that he no longer remains a viable resource in the new era. He, too, is very

self-centered. His egocentricity varies from Torvald's in its manifestation: instead of directing Linda's actions as Torvald does Nora's, Willy tries to impress Linda by making his small successes seem larger and by lying to her to protect his ego. After having been fired from his salesman's position, Willy says to his sons, "I was fired, and I'm looking for a little good news to tell your mother, because the woman has waited and the woman has suffered. The gist of it is that I haven't got a story left in my head" (Miller 787). Willy has lied to his wife about his failures and therefore protected himself from full recognition of them for so long that he recoils from telling her the truth.

Willy's focus on himself may also be seen in his relationships with mistresses and in his preparation for suicide. Willy gives his mistress new stockings but is unable to afford to give his wife any. Then he gets upset when he finds Linda mending her old stockings and tells her not to. When Biff goes to Boston to talk to his father, he discovers Willy with another woman and sees Willy as a fake. Biff accuses Willy, "You--you gave her Mama's stockings!" (791). Although stockings by themselves are a very small part of a woman's wardrobe and her life as a whole, in *Death of a Salesman* they represent the way in which Willy places Linda second to his mistress.

Willy discounts Linda's feelings throughout the play. One of the most obvious ways in which he does this is in his attempts to kill himself. The reader discovers that Willy repeatedly wrecks his car and that the insurance company suspects that his wrecks are not accidents but are pre-meditated. Willy has also connected a rubber pipe to the gas line in the basement of his house and has allowed Linda to discover its existence. Of course, Linda is not strong enough to confront Willy with an acknowledgement

of the piping or of any of his suicide attempts, but instead she passively removes the piping during the day and then replaces it before Willy returns every night.

Despite being set in a differing place and time, the society and the norms it places on women are comparable in *Death of a Salesman* and *A Doll's House*. *A Doll's House* was written and produced 70 years before *Death of a Salesman*, yet the similarities of the societal expectations of women are quite striking. Both Linda and Nora are expected to provide emotional support for their husbands and to raise their children. Neither works, and each depends on her husband for financial stability. Although one would think that Linda has choices in the twentieth-century United States seemingly not available to Nora, it is Nora who decides to leave her husband and her family. Linda remains in her subordinate position throughout the play.

Nora's development throughout *A Doll's House* may be seen by the reader or the audience of the play. Although she has acted independently and has naively risked forgery to secure her husband's health, one does not know that at the beginning of the play. The reader observes her reaction to Torvald's pet names and at first thinks that she has no will of her own. In his book *Henrik Ibsen*, David Thomas writes, "She...always humours him and helps him to feel that he takes all the important decisions in their life" (71). In this way, Nora supports the facade that Torvald is in total control. In the first scene Nora appears to be very wasteful and also quite superficial, but one soon learns that this estimation of her is not correct. Although she appears to Torvald to squander money on frivolities, in actuality, Nora saves as much as she can of what Torvald gives her and also takes in copying work on the side to pay back Krogstad for the loan she secured.

Throughout Acts I and II, the reader discovers the independent actions of Nora that have occurred in the past and also observes changes in Nora's attitudes. When she and Torvald are speaking of a ball which they are supposed to attend, Nora says, "I can't think of anything to wear. It all seems so stupid and meaningless" (Ibsen 383). During the same conversation, she tries to convince Torvald not to fire Krogstad. Although she does not confess her transactions with Krogstad to Torvald, Nora speaks to Torvald on Krogstad's behalf. Her attempts at influencing Torvald are thwarted when Torvald speaks of Krogstad's crime, forgery, and of his moral failure. During this scene Nora begins to assert her individuality, while still remaining the woman she is supposed to be.

Ibsen recognizes Nora's potential for individual growth in the final scene of the play. She renounces her life with Torvald and decides to leave him and their children. In this scene Torvald discovers her loan from Krogstad and her forgery to obtain the loan. He does not recognize the courage Nora displayed when she took the responsibility for saving his life, but instead, he thinks of himself and his reputation. Only when he receives the I.O.U. from Krogstad does he "forgive" Nora for her actions. He exclaims, "Yes, yes, it's true! I am saved! Nora, I am saved!" (399). When Nora asks her fate, he replies that she, too, is saved. Because he does not think of her until she questions him, Torvald once again demonstrates his self-centeredness and his inability to recognize Nora in any way except how she relates to him and his happiness.

Torvald does not realize at first the great change that has occurred in Nora since his discovery of her actions. She had wanted him to tell her that they would face it together, that he would "step forward and take all the blame" (402) and then give her the chance not to let him,

but instead, he denounces her as a wife and a mother. After Nora tells him what she had wanted, Torvald says, "But no man can be expected to sacrifice his honor, even for the person he loves" (402). Nora willingly risked everything important to her so that Torvald could regain his health, but he will not blemish his reputation in order to save her.

When Nora perceives her true relationship with Torvald, she is unable to reconcile herself to her fate as a wife to him and as a mother to his children. She blames him and says, "It's your fault that I have done nothing with my life" (401). She attempts to explain the change that has occurred within her and tells Torvald, "I believe that I am first and foremost a human being, like you--or anyway, that I must try to become one" (401). In order to do this, Nora must break away from her domestic life and all that has defined her as a woman and a person in nineteenth-century society. Joan Templeton explains this in her essay "The *Doll House* Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen." Templeton writes,

> When she realizes that she is unfit to do anything in life and announces her remedy--'I have to educate myself.'--she expresses a nineteenth-century feminism's universally agreed-upon base for women's emancipation. (32)

Through the course of *A Doll's House*, Nora has grown from a naive woman, independent enough to act on her own to help her husband yet not autonomous enough to confront him with what she has done, into a person able to take responsibility for her actions, despite their being in direct conflict with the norms placed upon her by her husband and by society.

The change and development of Nora's character in *A Doll's House* directly contrasts the static characterization

and lack of development of Linda in *Death of a Salesman*. Nora exhibits the potential for change throughout the play, but Linda never has this ability. Nora blames Torvald for suppressing her ability to grow as a person; Linda never even thinks to blame Willy. She seems content with her position as wife and mother throughout the production. In Willy's flashbacks throughout *Death of a Salesman*, Miller characterizes Linda as the stereotypical housewife; she puts the laundry out to dry. Linda does not assert herself as a person the way in which Nora does, and she allows Willy and his fantasies to control her life.

Linda does not change into an autonomous person even when she is faced with Willy's suicide attempts. Instead of approaching Willy with the gas piping or with her knowledge that his car wrecks have not been accidents, she tries to placate him and make him feel better. She instructs her sons to do the same. When she tells Biff and Happy about finding the piping, she says,

> How can I mention it to him...How can I insult him that way? I don't know what to do. I live from day to day, boys. It tell you, I know every thought in his mind. It sounds so old-fashioned and silly, but I tell you he put his whole life into you and you've turned your backs on him. Biff, I swear to God! Biff, his life is in your hands! (Miller 773)

Instead of taking any action on her part, Linda places the responsibility for Willy on Biff. Miller does not give Linda the ability to do anything but act as the nurturing wife; she cannot break out of this mold and change their lives.

In the last scene of *Death of a Salesman*, Linda sits by Willy's grave. Even at this point in the play, Linda does not try to understand Willy or the role she took in perpetuating his fantasies. She speaks to Willy's grave of

how their house mortgage has been paid and deludes herself in believing that they were "free and clear" (797). She allows herself to continue believing in the false hopes and visions of her life with Willy after his death. She has not changed from the woman she was in the first scene of the play.

Both *A Doll's House* and *Death of a Salesman* may be termed "problem plays," for they both deal with social issues in the context of the societies in which they are set. While Ibsen focuses on the problem of women and their place in society in *A Doll's House*, Miller centers his play around the perception of the "American dream." The American dream has typically been a male one, which may account for Miller's marginalizing of his main female character. Miller's tragic hero is the male character, Willy, while Ibsen's hero is the woman, Nora. Nora seems on the surface to be typical for her age and place in society, but as the play continues, it becomes obvious that she is a much deeper person than may be thought at first glance. Ibsen instills in her the ability to change and develop, while Miller pays attention to Linda only to make her a part of Willy's American fantasy.

Perhaps Ibsen did not consciously create Nora in order to facilitate the feminist movement that was beginning to dawn in Europe and in the United States, but her characterization, and *A Doll's House* as a whole, has been used to show the plight of women in the two varying societies. Templeton writes,

> The universalist critics of *A Doll's House* make the familiar claim that the work can be no more about women than men because the interests of both are the same "human" ones; sex is irrelevant, and thus gender nonexistent, in the literary search for the self, which transcends and obliterates mere biological and

> social determination...But to say that Nora Helmer stands for the individual in search of his or her self...is wrong, if not absurd. For it means that Nora's conflict has essentially nothing to do with her identity as a nineteenth-century married woman, a married woman, or a woman. Yet both Nora and *A Doll's House* are unimaginable otherwise. (31)

Whether or not Ibsen wanted Nora to take up the feminist torch, she did and must be analyzed as an independent person in the context of being a woman in a male-dominated society.

Linda also exists in a male-oriented society, but Miller does nothing to show that he believes women's positions in society should change. Miller focuses only on Willy's failed pursuit of the American dream and does not allow Linda to do anything separate from Willy. Does this lack of independent characterization make Miller a chauvinist and trivialize *Death of a Salesman*'s importance in the American literary canon? Because Miller has written such a strong assessment of the failure of American culture to perpetuate the actual realization of the typical American dream by most citizens, his characterization of Linda as stereotypical does not make the play a failure. Although one may wish that he had done more to make Linda an independent woman, Miller and his play withstand this criticism.

Ibsen did influence Miller's choice to write plays in which society and its ills play an important part, but Miller moves away from Ibsen in his choice of what problems to write about. In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen exhibits the problems women faced in nineteenth-century society, but Miller chooses not to focus *Death of a Salesman* on the same type of issue. In choosing to make his hero a woman, Ibsen breaks from the established norms of heroes

as males, while Miller, 70 years later, does not. Although the plays differ from one another and represent a society foreign to the one in which we now live, both are still relevant in today's society. Neither the feminist movement nor the changes that have occurred in American society in the past decades have altered the world to such a great degree as to make either play obsolete.

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Wolves and Women: The Sexual Fears of the Male Protagonists in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Amorak Huey

With his dark cape, sharp fangs, and strange powers, Count Dracula has become an archetype of evil in our society. In Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, the Count is so dangerous that five men chase him across Europe to destroy him. To these men and to Stoker, the Count represents pure evil; of that there is little question. Jonathan Harker, Dr. John Seward, Arthur Godalming, Quincey Morris, and Dr. Abraham Van Helsing band together to hunt down this evil and destroy it. They do so, as Dr. Van Helsing says, "for the good of mankind" (326). But why is it so necessary that Dracula be destroyed? What makes him such a threat to "mankind"? It seems that Van Helsing's unintentionally sexist term is rather telling about the group's underlying motives in killing Dracula. Although the Count attacks only women in the novel, the men seem to be more afraid of him than are the women. The five men think that they, as men, have a duty to protect Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker, whom they see

as "their women." By biting the women, Dracula changes them into something menacing, horrible--and sexual. The men have non-sexual conceptions of women to which they expect Lucy and Mina to conform--conventional "feminine" roles of virgin, wife, and mother. Dracula and vampirism cause Lucy and Mina to reject their traditional roles, thus robbing the men of their masculine identities; this perceived emasculation is ultimately why the men are so threatened by Count Dracula.

The first instance in the novel of a man's being threatened by a sexually aggressive woman occurs in Castle Dracula. Jonathan Harker wanders through the castle, venturing into rooms that the Count has forbidden him to enter. Having fallen asleep in one of those rooms, he awakens to find himself in the company of three female vampires:

> There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time fear. I felt in my heart a wicked[1] burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. (46)

That he is sexually attracted to these vampires is obvious; he even thinks briefly of Mina, his fiancée, feeling a momentary pang of guilt for his lustful thoughts. His desire is somewhat lessened by his fear, however, as one of the female vampires takes on an aggression that Jonathan finds simultaneously exciting and frightening:

> The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck, she licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range

> of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat....I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the super-sensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of the sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited--waited with beating heart. (46-47)

Jonathan recounts the vampire's actions in language that describes not only an extremely erotic and sexual act but also an animal about to prey. Thus we see that in Jonathan Harker's mind (and the minds of the other men in the novel) a woman becomes like an animal when she becomes sexually dominant.

In her biography of Bram Stoker, Phyllis Roth claims that Jonathan's part in the above scene is not only that of willing victim but also that of child (118). Jonathan says the female vampire's face seems somehow familiar to him, that he seems "to know it in connection with some dreamy fear" (46); Roth theorizes that this face is the face of a mother presented as archetype. Supporting her claim is the fact that as a substitute for Jonathan, Count Dracula gives the three women vampires a child (Roth, *Stoker* 118). If we accept that Jonathan sees himself as child in this situation, then we can see that the seduction becomes all the more frightening for a Victorian male who believes in an ideal of the maternal, nurturing woman. Jonathan becomes aware that the female vampires would have destroyed him without Dracula's intervention, and he realizes with horror that they plan to destroy the child that Dracula gives them. The female vampire then is a mother, but a mother who rejects maternity, a mother who seduces and destroys her child rather than caring for it.

Roth argues that the fear of the devouring female is combined with a twisted Oedipal fantasy in the above

scene. She claims that the situation conjures up:

> the mythic image of the *vagina dentata* evident in so many folk tales in which the mouth and the vagina are identified with one another by the primitive mind and pose the threat of castration to all men until the teeth are extracted by the hero. (*Stoker* 123)

Roth seems to have an excellent point here. The language that Stoker uses to describe the vampire's mouth is quite evocative and sensual. At the same time, though, it is bestial and dangerous. This theory also explains in part Jonathan's dual response of arousal and terror. He is excited by the vaginal mouth but made wary by the sharp teeth that threaten him.

Jonathan's attitude toward these vampire women changes between the time he first sees them and the time he leaves the castle. At first, he calls the women "ladies, by their dress and manner" (45),[2] and he certainly seems willing to let the one vampire have her way with him, but after this encounter he is repulsed by the mere thought of them, calling them "awful women...devils of the Pit" (61), with whom his beloved, chaste Mina has nothing in common. The fact that the woman's face seems familiar to him, however, shows that Jonathan does indeed identify these women with real women. In fact, if they did not represent real women, he would not feel shame and guilt when he thinks of Mina learning of the incident (Weissman 74). He says that Mina is unlike the vampires, yet

> the whole book reveals the fear that they do indeed have something in common. There is always the possibility that the Victorian wife will become the sort of woman that her husband both desires and fears. (Weissman 75)

Jonathan wanted to kiss the vampires, and he submits himself to whatever the women have planned for him; he

later judges and blames not himself but the women, despite his passive acceptance of the situation.

This passivity becomes yet another threat for Jonathan. He is repulsed by the female vampires' aggressiveness, which robs him of his proper sexual role as a man. He is forced to play a submissive role, the part usually assigned to women in his society. As he lies waiting, he can feel the teeth on his flesh, and his part becomes even more feminine, waiting for penetration. In addition, the woman plans to draw out of Jonathan "the fluid necessary for life" (Roth, *Stoker* 121). Roth suggests that Jonathan seems to view this act as a form of castration (122). Certainly he leaves Castle Dracula to escape Dracula and the women in hopes of preserving his life, yet his manhood also seems to be at stake. Before he begins the climb down the cliff to safety, he writes in his diary that "the precipice is steep and high. At its foot a man may sleep--as a man" (62).

Although how the female vampires came to be is never explicitly spelled out, Dracula's control over them seems to indicate that he created them. In addition, he reminds them that they should know from past actions that he knows how to love (47),[3] intimating that he once loved them, or perhaps had sex with them. They are all three quite physically attractive, and from Jonathan's responses to them, we can gather that they are relatively youthful. We do not know what these women were like before Dracula made them vampires, but we do know what the two women whom he attacks in the novel are like. Mina is newly married when she is attacked; Lucy is engaged. As critic Judith Weissman points out, Dracula does not bite "single women, preadolescent women, or old women. He attacks women who are desired by other men and who are becoming sexually experienced" (75). When Dracula bites Lucy and Mina, they seem to become even more sexually

aware, and as they turn into vampires, "they become too sexual for their husbands or fiances to endure" (Weissman 75).

Lucy is the first of the two women to be attacked by Dracula, and we watch as she deteriorates toward death and vampirism. During the daytime, she is quite languid and sad; at night "she becomes very sexual" (Weissman 75) as she comes more and more under the Count's influence. But even before the Count's attacks, Lucy seems to be a rather sexual being. She tells us directly that she is attracted to Arthur, Seward, and Quincey Morris, wishing that it were possible for a "girl" to marry three "men," or as many as would have her (68). In fact, even her sleepwalking, which seems to be a metaphor for sexual consciousness, precedes Dracula (Johnson 26). Sex is associated with sleeping, even by Mina, who says that men and women should be allowed to see each other sleeping before they marry (100). By sleepwalking, Lucy takes an active role in her own sleeping, an activity which should be passive. This active role, then, becomes a metaphor for Lucy's awakening sexuality. Lucy's nighttime excursions are quite frightening to the men, as are the mysterious bite marks on her neck. Metaphorically, these puncture wounds and Lucy's loss of blood can be taken to represent her loss of virginity--or at the least her loss of innocence.

During the course of Lucy's illness, she requires blood transfusions from each of the four men. The literal and metaphorical significance of these transfusions is not lost on any of the men.[4] The blood transfused into Lucy must be from a man; women are too frail to provide enough. John Seward agrees to be her first donor, but both he and Van Helsing are relieved when Arthur shows up in time to take his place. It is fitting that her betrothed be her partner in such an intimate act. Eventually, however, all four men

must give of their blood, and they all seem to agree with Seward's sentiment that "no man knows, till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own lifeblood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves" (137). The transfusions seem to make the men feel like men--they all are proud to give of themselves in order to save Lucy, to whom they are all sexually attracted. Yet they also seem to fear Lucy more and more. There is something illicit about the transfusions that do not come from Arthur, and Van Helsing warns against letting Arthur learn of them for fear that he might be jealous or hurt. This attitude stems from the sexual nature of the transfusions and of Lucy, and this sexuality is closely aligned with her growing vampirism.

While Lucy's health is declining and she is turning into a vampire, a wolf escapes from a nearby zoological gardens and appears at her window. From the very beginning of the novel, Dracula has been identified with wolves, and we assume that he is in control of this one as well. In an excerpt from the "Pall Mall Gazette," we read of an interviewer investigating the escaped wolf. The wolf, named Bersicker, has little plot value other than to show Dracula's hold on Lucy, but his thematic value is significant. The interviewer talks to Thomas Bilder, a zookeeper, and Bilder says several things that serve to connect the wolf to Lucy on a metaphorical level. First, he says that Bersicker has always been a nice, well-behaved wolf, never causing any trouble. Never, that is, until the appearance of a tall, gaunt stranger we know to be the Count. Bilder credits the wolf's disappearance to the creature's fickle nature. In a statement that seems to sum up the attitude toward women shared by all the men in the book, he says, "You can't trust wolves no more nor women" (145). With this statement, Bilder connects wolves, and thus, by association, vampirism, with women,

and he declares both of them to be generally untrustworthy and equally threatening to men. As one critic, Gail Griffin, says, this novel is largely "a novel about wolflike women" (145). Bilder further links Lucy and the wolf when he says that Bersicker is only a threat to small children, foreshadowing Lucy's later victims.

Just before Lucy dies, she is openly vampiric in front of the men for the first time. In a voice hardly her own, a voice that is "soft and voluptuous" (168), she beckons Arthur to her: "Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come. Kiss me!" (168). Arthur begins to respond eagerly to this frankly sexual invitation, but Van Helsing prevents him, telling him that his life, his soul, and Lucy's soul depend on his resistance. The implication of this warning is clear: beware of sexually aggressive women. After Lucy dies and becomes a full-fledged vampire, it is even more important that the men avoid her sexual advances. When Arthur goes with the group to destroy her, she again tries to seduce (and therefore attack) him: "Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you" (218). Seward says that there is something "diabolically sweet" (218) in her voice, something that again is both attractive and repulsive to the men.

Another aspect of Lucy's vampirism that makes her so fearsome to the men is that she attacks only children. Just as the three female vampires in Castle Dracula, Lucy rejects maternity, becoming a destroyer instead of a nurturer. In some ways, Lucy and her rejection of motherhood are even more insidious than the other three female vampires, because her vampirism is not limited to the animal-like savagery of Dracula's castlemates. Rather, Lucy makes children attracted to her. The children she bites call her the beautiful lady, and they all want to be her victims. Lucy becomes at once seductress and mother; she

uses the very feminine role that she rejects to further her vampirism. When the men confront Lucy in front of her tomb, she throws to the ground the child she held at her breast, proving that "Dracula has so completely polluted her femininity that she has lost all maternal feeling" (Griffin 143). This point is when the men lose all feeling for her, and her cold-bloodedness brings a groan even from her devoted Arthur (217).

The next night the men follow Lucy into her tomb, and Arthur drives a stake through her heart, a symbolically phallic deed of great importance. Not only is the act of penetrating her with a stake sexually significant, her death is described in terms that very closely resemble a description of a woman having an orgasm: "The Thing[5] in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling scream came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut" (222). Here again we have the *vagina dentata*. Lucy's mouth is described in sexual terms, and the men are repulsed by it. But here Arthur becomes the hero and removes the teeth and the threat.

That it is Arthur who destroys Lucy is meaningful because of the sexual nature of the destruction. Not only is Lucy's death evocative of an orgasm, but Arthur's own role is described in sexual terms:

> His untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it....Finally [Lucy] lay still. The terrible task was over. The hammer fell from Arthur's hand. He reeled and would have fallen had we not caught him. The great drops of sweat sprang from his forehead, and his breath came in broken gasps. (222)

Plainly, the act is representative of intercourse. But this is correct intercourse, as far as the men are concerned. Arthur is the aggressor in consummating his marriage with Lucy, and the language even suggests that he takes her virginity (the blood symbolizes the loss of her hymen). This act of sex restores Arthur to his proper role as a man and Lucy to her passive role as a woman. Lucy's salvation, as well as the men's, lies in her restoration to her correct role as submissive female. The men all breathe a great sigh of relief after this scene, grateful that, at least temporarily, things have been returned to their natural state.

This "natural state" is short-lived, however. Mina and Jonathan Harker are already on their way to London, where Mina will become Dracula's next victim. The men view Mina somewhat differently than they do Lucy. As already stated, the men were all physically and romantically attracted to Lucy. They are also attracted to Mina, but not quite in the same manner. From his very first meeting with her, Van Helsing idealizes Mina. Before he knows her well, he compares her to an angel. Seward later calls her a "sweet, sweet, good, good woman" (313), and the other men seem to share these opinions. For the men, Mina becomes "the archetypal Good Woman" (Griffin 145), responsible for carrying out the role Lucy has abandoned. She is already married, so she becomes untouchable. Instead of being the desirable virgin, she becomes the loyal wife on her way to being the nurturing mother. She is somewhat less sexually threatening than was Lucy, and the men become symbolically her sons rather than her lovers (Roth, *Stoker* 121). In addition, Mina takes on the role of sister, asexual and caring. Then, when she meets Quincey Morris, he calls her "little girl" (237), so she takes on a third role, that of "eternal child,

Dracula, and when Dracula leaves London, the men must chase him to save Mina and all "mankind." Mina asks Van Helsing why they have to hunt down Dracula when he has left them and is no longer an immediate danger to them. His response to her is indicative of the men's fear of her as a woman and a vampire: "Because he can live for centuries, and you are but mortal woman. Time is now to be dreaded--since once he put that mark upon your throat" (319). In other words, the men know that once Mina dies, she will become as Lucy was: a female vampire who seduces and destroys men, rejecting the correct notion of femininity and womanhood.

So, the men set off across Europe to kill Count Dracula and end this threat to Mina--and to themselves. But whom (or what) exactly are they chasing? In all that has occurred, we have actually seen very little of Dracula himself.[7] In what we have seen of him, we discover that he knows perfectly well that the way to intimidate the men is through their women. In a face-to-face confrontation in one of Dracula's London homes, he tells the men, "Your girls that you love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine" (312). This statement reveals a double threat to the men. First, he is attacking their society at what the men perceive as its weakest point--its women. But the second threat is more immediate and more terrifying:

> He can destroy this collective male unconscious symbolically, by transforming its ideal Good Women into sexual wolves. He is both a sexual competitor gloating over his superior prowess and a subliminal voice within our heroes, whispering that at heart, the girls they love are all potential vampires, that their angels are, in fact, whores." (Griffin 147)

Dracula, then, represents to the men both their

shortcomings and their fears. They worry that they are not masculine enough to be men and that women can steal what masculinity they do have. In short, these men are worried that Dracula is a better man than they.

That the men think of the Count as something of a superman is evident also in that they seem to project their own desires onto him. Although Dracula is the character associated with killing and destruction, most of the "on-stage" killing is actually done by the heroes (Roth, "Suddenly" 61). Their internal desire to destroy comes to the surface when Seward sees the Lucy-vampire. "Had she then to be killed I could have done it with savage delight" (217), he says. Such speech is hardly to be expected of the good guys. In addition, Dracula represents to the men power, sex, and immortality, all of which seem to be traits desired by men.

As well as all that he stands for as a man, and rather paradoxically, Dracula is also associated with female sexuality. In the scene where Mina drinks his blood, the language used to describe Dracula's mouth relates to him the qualities of the *vagina dentata*:

> The Count turned his face....The great nostrils of the white aquiline nose opened wide and quivered at the edge; and the white sharp teeth, behind the full lips of the blood-dripping mouth, clamped together like those of a wild beast. (288)

Again we have the evocative language and the reminder that if female sexuality is not destroyed, it will destroy its male victims. To the men, this scene is perhaps the most horrific they encounter, for it represents their worst fears. They know that they must track down Dracula and symbolically pull the teeth from the threatening mouth.

When the men finally reach Transylvania, there are two things they must accomplish. Obviously, they have to kill

Dracula himself, but they also must visit his castle and destroy the three female vampires. Van Helsing is chosen to kill the female vampires, and he does so, visiting the castle during daylight and driving a stake through each of them. The act of phallic aggression is reminiscent of Lucy's destruction, and these three female vampires die similarly, with appropriate orgasmic writhing and screeching. Significant in their destruction, however, is Van Helsing's attraction to them. He finds them so beautiful, so sexually exciting, that he is hard pressed to kill them and is even momentarily entranced. He finds their sexual nature both revulsive and attractive, but in the end, it is too threatening for him to allow, and he kills them.

In comparison to the deaths of the women vampires, Dracula himself dies rather peacefully. Jonathan beheads him, Quincey plunges a Bowie knife through his heart, and the Count crumbles away into dust (380). With this symbolic castration of Dracula, the men restore their world to its natural order, freeing Mina from the curse of vampirism and sexuality. No longer is Mina a wantonly sexual woman, and the men are no longer threatened by her. The men have not outgrown or overcome their fears; they have merely eliminated the source of those fears.[8] They can rest assured that they have fulfilled their masculine roles, protecting their Mina from vampirism and sex. Appropriately enough, Mina gives birth to a boy on the anniversary of Dracula's death, and that boy is given the names of each of our men. In him rests the future; he is to be the embodiment of all the positive masculine traits the men see in themselves. The novel ends with Van Helsing's words of praise for Mina:

> This boy will someday know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her

> sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare so much for her sake. (382)

Mina has been restored to her position as ideal woman. She is sweet and good, maternal and nurturing.

Dracula is a monster throughout the novel, but his threat is more serious than mere blood-sucking and murder. If he were simply a killer, the men would most likely have let him escape back to Transylvania. However, Dracula and vampirism represent a sexuality that the men cannot allow in their world--female sexuality. The men fear women, and to allow a woman to possess sexual aggression is to deny that aggression to men, unstabilizing their self-definition. The men see women with desires as menacing to their masculinity, and desires are released by Dracula's bite. Therefore, they must chase down Dracula and end his power in an effort to save their own. But what is most despicable about the men's attitude toward women is the dual response to alluring women evinced by the men throughout the book. The men are not merely repulsed by sexual women; they are also attracted to them. Jonathan Harker wants the female vampires in Castle Dracula to kiss him, to bite him. Despite his revulsion, he is perfectly willing to be their victim. Van Helsing is also quite aroused by these vampires. Arthur must be prevented from kissing Lucy when she beckons him in front of her tomb. The men never stop to think about their own role in this attraction. To do so would be to admit weakness, and weakness is not masculine. Instead, the men blame the women entirely and kill them. It is bad enough that the men are afraid of sexual women; it is even worse that they want women to be sexual and then destroy them for it.

Notes

[1]Jonathan's use of the adjective *wicked* is telling. He clearly sees sex as something to be abhorred and sexual desire as wrong.

[2]Critic Gail Griffin argues that the fact that Jonathan sees these women as ladies "makes them all the more perversely exciting, as only lower-class women were supposed to have sexual desires" (138).

[3]Critic Clive Leatherdale suggests that the relationship between Dracula and the three female vampires has incestuous overtones, adding yet another sexual taboo to vampirism. According to Leatherdale, Dracula seems to represent the husband of one of the vampires and the father of the other two, which makes his statement that they should know he is able to love even more horrific (149).

[4]The significance of these blood transfusions is great. Dracula sucks blood from his victims; Lucy drains the blood of the men in these transfusions. The mingling of blood is clearly symbolic of sexual intercourse, as blood becomes an analogy for semen (Leatherdale 149). Thus, Lucy's sexual awakening is furthered by the blood transfusions.

[5]That John calls Lucy "The Thing" at this point is telling. She is now so far removed from his Victorian male sense of femininity that he cannot identify her as a woman. Moments later, after her vampiric side is destroyed, he again calls her Lucy, noting that her "sweetness and purity" (222) have been restored.

[6]The scar on Mina's head is further significant in that it serves to connect Mina with Dracula. Dracula still bears

the red scar on his forehead where Jonathan struck him. Now they are both marked, warning the world of the danger they represent.

[7]Dracula's absence throughout a large part of the novel seems to reflect the fact that the true enemies of the men are women and sexuality. In fact, he himself never physically threatens the men, except in Castle Dracula, where he tells the female vampires that Jonathan Harker is his; this threat, however, proves empty.

[8]This reading of the end of the novel is not universally shared. One critic, Alan Johnson, believes that by destroying Count Dracula, the men have come to terms with their fears of women. Johnson believes that Mina and Jonathan Harker wind up as equal partners in marriage, and that the New Woman triumphs in the person of Mina (36).

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The Incompatibility of Marxism and Feminism

Natalie Meyer

Within western industrialized culture, some feminists who view capitalism as an oppressive social, economic, and political structure have attempted to incorporate feminist thought into that of Marxism. In most attempts, however, this incorporation repeatedly has meant the compromising of feminist needs and aims. In contrast to Marxism, which places total emphasis upon the fight to destroy capitalism, feminism places as great or greater an emphasis on the battle against the forces of patriarchy. Patriarchy, the domination of women by men and the institutions among men that perpetuate this domination, pervades all areas of both the public and private spheres, and yet in spite of patriarchy's all-encompassing nature, Marxism gives it little attention, deeming it a manifestation of capitalism which will disappear after the workers' revolution. Although the male wage laborer experiences exploitation and oppression under capitalism, his experience cannot be generalized to a woman's experience under both capitalism and patriarchy. By denying the existence of patriarchy as an entity separate from capitalism, Marxism renders itself

incompatible with the aims of feminism.

Before turning to a discussion of the relationship between Marxism and feminism, it is helpful to examine the basic features of traditional Marxist thought. In building the case against capitalism, Marxism begins with a foundation of human nature as defined through an approach of historical-materialism. Unlike liberalism, Marxism holds that there is no one universal human nature. Instead, according to Marxism, human nature is historical in that it is created in the changing contexts of societies. The production of food, clothing, and shelter within society is what separates humans from animals, since human activity is conscious and has direction. This purposeful activity is what Marx calls 'praxis.' Through praxis, the first historical act is performed in order to satisfy an existing need; in turn, this action creates new needs. In this way, humans continually create their own needs while at the same time creating their own nature (Jagger 53-54).

According to traditional Marxism, human nature further is characterized by the mode of production in a given society. Individuals living in a hunting/gathering society differ in nature from those living in an agrarian society, just as those individuals living in a feudal society differ in nature from those living in a nineteenth-century industrial society. Societies are constituted by different modes of production, and these modes are fundamental to the character of a particular society, which is fundamental to the creation of human nature. It follows, in traditional Marxist thought, that there can be no abstract individual; the individual is constantly changing in response to his or her changing society.

For Marxism, the importance of the mode of production in capitalist society lies in the fact that capitalism creates class distinctions, which are inherently

hierarchical. Marxism regards class distinctions as creating certain categories of social types--the bourgeois and the proletarian--and individuals within these two types display different characteristics. Therefore it can be said that in addition to the combined influences of history and the mode of production, human nature is defined also by one's class.

It is the place of the proletariat, or working class, in which Marxist thought is centered. According to Marxism, work is valuable. It is through work that humans realize their potential as creative beings. Forced work, however, is harmful to this potential. A worker's labor power (not the labor itself) is seen as property in the person, and this property is exploited by capitalism through forced work. Capitalism limits, or represses, an individual's creative identity because capital, in owning the means of production, alienates worker from both product and labor power. Workers do not instantly rebel because they are held in a sort of mental check by the dominant ideology of capitalist society which creates a "false consciousness" among the worker class, as well as the bourgeoisie. The belief in the inevitability of a class society is an element of this false consciousness, as is modern liberal contractarianism. Under liberal contractarianism, the worker contracts freely with the capitalist, and by definition individuals who voluntarily enter into a contract cannot be considered exploited.

Marxism argues that if they are ever to reach their full potential, members of the proletariat must lay aside this false consciousness and rise up against capitalism, taking the means of production into their own hands. It is, in fact, the potentiality of humans to achieve their full creative powers that makes them potentially revolutionary. Without this potential, workers are merely exploited workers, lacking any sort of initiative for revolution (Eisenstein 7).

With this initiative, though, workers will rise up, and according to traditional Marxist thought, their revolution will bring an end to their alienation and will create a classless society in which the state shall wither away.

These are the basic tenets of traditional Marxist thought, and it is within these principles that feminists have, at times, attempted to create parallels between Marxist and feminist theory. It is not difficult to see how the doctrines of Marxism would have first attracted feminists. The idea of the relationship of the proletariat to the bourgeois as analogous to the relationship of women to men can appear ideal. The male gender, seen as holding the reigns of power, neatly fits into the category of "bourgeoisie," while the female gender, seen as laboring under the dominance of men, falls equally as neatly into the category of "proletariat." Some feminists therefore could make the connection that woman, like workers, are unable to achieve their potential within the existing structures of society, and so become a potentially revolutionary body of individuals.

More specifically, this relationship of worker to capitalist has been seen as analogous to the relationship of wife to husband. It is this analogy that has been particularly attractive to some feminists, for within it lie all the possibilities of a comparison of the employment contract with the marriage contract. The above-mentioned relationship between males and females is too broad in that it cannot be seen in the context of a contract, for women, as a group, do not enter a contract to be dominated by men. By narrowing the scope to the relationship of husband and wife, feminists have been able to argue that the marriage contract, like the employment contract, is an exploitative contract.

The early feminists fought for civil independence for

the wife, whose property and person passed form father to husband under the law; the wife had no "civic" personality. Women also fought for women's suffrage; enfranchisement is, like the ownership of property, one of the basic freedoms associated with the individual under modern liberal thinking, in which supposedly all individuals exercise rational thought, although, "all individuals" originally included only white male property holders. Women, as well as a number of minorities, were excluded. Having gained recognition as rational individuals, women continue to argue for more equal laws within the marriage contract.

The liberal feminist argument based upon women as rational individuals, however, can be turned against itself. Opponents argue that the marriage contract is just that, a *contract*--and implicit within the definition of contract is the idea that only rational individuals are able to "contract in." More importantly, a contract is valid only if these rational individuals enter into it voluntarily. Therefore, liberal feminists are caught in a theoretically-bound web. Their opponents argue that women, as rational individuals, by definition enter freely into marriage contracts of which they fully know the conditions, and for some, the conditions of the marriage contract seem fairly equal: the husband provides shelter and security in return for housework, childbearing an rearing, and sexual services from the wife. Further, marriage contracts are not compulsory, so those women who believe that the conditions are unfair are not compelled to enter into the contract. For liberal feminists to argue that women are not aware of the conditions or are not entering these contracts voluntarily is to undercut their own arguments that women are rational individuals just as are men.

To counter these arguments, some feminists employ

Marxist thought and its revealing commentary upon the exploitative character of the employment contract. According to traditional Marxist thought, capitalists, using the tools of modern liberal contractarianism, maintain an overarching belief system in which workers enter into the employment contract voluntarily, in which no capitalist forces any man to become a worker, and in which workers know the conditions of their contracts. In reality, Marxism argues, workers are forced into employment contracts simply because they have no other options. Capital owns the means of production which leaves workers no choice but to sell their labor power, for labor power, as property in one's person, is the only property workers own.

Similarly, feminists are able to argue that the marriage contract, like the employment contract, is not really a voluntary venture. Men control women's economic opportunities, so women are forced to enter this "contract" because economically they are left no other choice. The argument continues that the rational individual as universal is simply a figment of false consciousness, an idea in which women as well as workers have been deceived. As Pateman points out, however, the marriage contract and the employment contract are not the same sort of contract; the employment contract concerns workers' *labor power*, but the marriage contract concerns women's *labor* (*Sexual Contract* 136). Labor power is something a worker can exchange for a wage. It is also something that can be exploited by capital through alienation. Marxism takes care to emphasize this distinction between labor and labor power. In contrast to a worker, a wife contracts out her labor (what she does), not her labor power (her ability to do what she does); in effect, she contracts out herself.

In effect, women's oppression issues from the male gender as well as from the ruling class as purported by

Marxism. Marxism does not explain this double oppression experienced by women, and herein lies the major failure of Marxism in regard to the needs and purposes of feminism. The inappropriateness of comparing the marriage contract to the employment contract is only one aspect of an examination of the incompatibility of Marxism and feminism; the more closely feminism examines Marxism, the more unsuitable the partnership appears. As mentioned above, traditional Marxism contends that woman's nature, like man's, is related historically to the developments of particular societies; there is no prior knowledge of woman's nature, nor is there a "universal woman" just as there is no "universal man."

On the one hand, there is an attempt within Marxism to generalize the "place" of women to that of men's. Marxist categories are gender-blind; and individual is either a bourgeois or proletarian. One either owns the means of production, or one is exploited by the owners. There is no recognition in Marxist theory that woman's place is characterized not only by production but also by her status as a woman. A man is characterized and his nature created in reaction to his status as a member of the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. A woman also can be a member of either of these groups; her position within these groups, however, is characterized further by her status as a woman. In the essay "Women, Class and Sexual Differences," Alexander explains that

> Against Marxism's claims that the determining social relationship is between wage labor and capital, exploiter and exploited, proletarian and capitalist, feminism insists on the recognition that subjective identity is also constructed as masculine or feminine, placing the individual as husband or wife, mother or father, son or daughter, and so on. ("Women, Class"

169)

Marxism's gender-blind categories do not take this fact into account. Hartmann, in *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, maintains that,

> just as capital creates these places [bourgeoisie and proletariat] indifferent to the individuals who fill them, the categories of Marxist analysis, class, reserve army of labor, wage-laborer, do not explain why particular people fill particular places. (10)

They do not tell why it is that women are subordinate to men.

On the other hand traditional Marxist theory does recognize some distinction between the places of men and women; it does not, however, do so in a way that adopts this distinction as a central component of Marxist theory. According to Elshtain, in *The Origin of the Family, Patriarchy, Property, and the State,* argues that the first class antagonism coincided with the development of antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage; the first class oppression was that of the female gender by the male gender (*Public Man* 258). The family relationships of monogamous marriage arose in relation to the changing modes of production. Male domination was based upon the ownership of private property, and the subsequent dependence of the women upon the men. Men now had property which they wished their offspring to inherit. Only through monogamous marriage could men most completely ensure the legitimacy of their offspring. So, in this "class division," men assumed a place within the category of the propertied bourgeoisie and women were forced into a place in the proletariat.

Engels appears to be sympathetic to the plight of women by comparing women to what he considers the oppressed class in a class society. He perhaps is

sympathetic, but he is not overly concerned for he then proceeds to subordinate relations of reproduction inherent in the male/female class division to the relations of reproduction inherent in the traditional worker/capitalist class division (Eisenstein 12). The husband is the bourgeois and the wife is the proletarian, but only within the boundaries of the family, within the private sphere. Within the economic, public sphere of production, class division is based on different characteristics wholly divorced from any male/female distinctions. It is with these traditional class distinctions that Marxism is most concerned. Women's place is generalized to that of men's, yet she is not actually given full consideration.

When Marxism does treat woman's oppression, it is seen in connection with production, just as is workers' oppression. Marxism hinges on the fact that capitalism is the prevailing mode of production. Women at the time of Marx and Engels were largely excluded from the work force as structured by capital. Marxists believed then, as they do now, that capital has benefitted from women's domination by men. Capital keeps women anchored in the home, providing free labor in terms of food preparation, childbearing and childrearing, cleaning, etc. In this way, capital, according to Marxism, ensures the continuation of the next generation of workers and the continued upkeep of the present workforce, and all at little cost to capital itself. The wives at home free the husbands to work. Marxism cites capitalism as an oppressor of women as a group and workers as a whole; however, Marxism does not find that men as a group oppress women as a group (Jagger 65). Therefore, although the domination of women by men results from the acquiring of property by men, this domination is now maintained by capitalism.

The solution which Marxism offers to this problem is

that women should join men in the revolution to end capitalism, for only through the end of capitalism will everyone be free to reach his or her potential. Women's entrance into public industry and wage labor will result in the equality of men and women, and at the same time, will aid in the overthrow of capitalism. This overthrow will effect the end of male domination because there will be no more private property. Until this overthrow, however, working women will be working wives with a double day of work, inside the home and out. Again, Marxism blames capitalism for this double burden, and moreover says that it is a burden which will last only as long as does capital.

Some feminist arguments raise objections to these "solutions" as constructed by Marxism. Elshtain contends that Engels finds the source of women's oppression "both in their exclusion from the mode of production and their exclusive inclusion in the sphere of reproduction" (262). The distinction made between these two spheres by Marxism is an important factor in understanding the divergence of feminist and Marxist thought. The public and private spheres, for Marxism, are spheres of production and reproduction, respectively. The economic theory of exploitation which forms the basis for Marxist thought is seen as separate from and independent of domestic and reproductive life. There is a gender division of labor that arose in the first human realization that a child is the result of a specific sex act. This realization confines women to the position of reproductive individuals. Their position in society is created and limited by their biology. Human praxis is not the only constant in an equation of human nature; the gender division of labor also factors in.

Marx could not have foreseen the future advancements of reproductive technology that are making it possible to remove women from the center of reproductive activity.

Early Marxism had to assume that, even after the proletariat revolution and the advent of socialism and collectivized work, women would remain the childbearers. Such limitation would result in a "hierarchical sexual ordering of society" in the future socialist society (Eisenstein 9). Marx, however, did not envision a hierarchical ordering of men and women, for "the sexual division of labor as the sexual division of roles, purposes, activities, etc. had no unique existence for Marx" (Eisenstein 9). The idea that women might still feel the weight of male dominance in the new society due to a gender-based division of tasks was not rejected by Marx or even dismissed as unimportant; the thought simply did not occur.

It is within present Marxist thought that the idea of the sexual division of labor, brought forward by feminists, has been dismissed as either secondary to the cause of Marxism or as a manifestation of the false consciousness promoted by capitalism. In the first case, Marxism places feminism in a subordinate position and places what it considers "women's issues" on the periphery of Marxist activism. In the second case concerning false consciousness, Marxism has accused feminism of falling under the influence of capitalism in its constant attempt to subordinate workers through the promulgation of false beliefs. Feminist ideas serve capitalism and the ruling class by obscuring class lines, and only solidarity between men and women in the working class will bring an end to capitalism and male domination. But is there any reason to accept such a rosy picture for the future? Eisenstein argues correctly that life under a communist state

> would still be structured by a sexual division of labor which would entail different life options for men and women. Sex roles would preassign tasks to women

> which would necessitate continued alienation and isolation. (11)

The removal of capitalism as the prevailing mode of production would not ensure the erasure of the sexual division of labor and subsequent social equality between men and women.

Presently, the sexual division of labor is not limited to the "private" world, but is also inherent in the "public" world. Marxism argues that women who are oppressed are those who are excluded from wage labor (Jagger 215). This would suggest that those who are in wage labor do not experience oppression, at least not in a manner that differs from the oppression experienced by the male worker. Since the time of Marx, women have steadily increased their numbers in the workforce. According to Marxism, this should have brought equality between working class women and men, but this has not happened. When women initially entered the workforce, it brought low wages for women and men. Men then fought to exclude women from unions, thus lessening women's chances to obtain and maintain higher wages. Men fought for the "family wage," a wage on which a male worker should be able to support his family without the aid of other income, in order that their wives should remain in the home. The jobs and wages of those wives that did join the workforce were seen as secondary, supplementary incomes to that of their husbands. Today, with a few exceptions, women continue to receive lower wages for jobs which are usually gender-defined--secretary, social worker, consumer, and restaurant services continue to be lower paid jobs reserved for women (Hartmann 21-22). In this way, work, which had been predicted to give economic independence and equality to women, has instead served only to further their dependence upon men and increase men's domination over them.

Although both men and women are now in wage labor, feminism argues that the Marxist concept of alienation of the worker is male-biased. "Worker" almost invariably means "male worker." Alienation occurs when the male worker is forced to sell his labor power to capital and yet never receives any benefits of the product of this labor power. The worker is free from alienation only when he eats, drinks, and procreates. A wife, however, is compelled to provide food, drink, and procreative services and so finds no "freedom" in them (Jagger 131). Working women are twice-alienated because of their "double workday." Their "defined sexual inferiority" allows society to pay these women lower wages and still expect them to provide maintenance for their working husbands and carry on as chief childbearers and childrearers. These women are not labelled "workers;" instead, the label changes to "working mothers," and as Eisenstein puts it, "the two jobs get done for the price of one" (29).

A "working mother" spans both the private and public spheres, as labelled by Marxism, yet oppression, as defined by Marxism, occurs only in the public sphere. Marxism visualizes oppression in terms of wage labor, the public sphere, the economy, material conditions, and capitalist class relations. It does not see oppression in terms of domestic labor, the private sphere, the family, ideology, or the sexual division of labor (Eisenstein 6). It is this dichotomy to which feminism objects. Private and public, which Marxism views as separate worlds, actually are interrelated. Marxists assume that it is possible to reach an understanding of the public realm of economics and politics without including the private sphere (Pateman "Feminist Critiques" 118). It is the interaction, however, of the spheres of private and public life which shapes economic and political structures, and these two spheres are

connected by the crucial "missing link" which has been eluded to throughout this discussion: patriarchy.

Patriarchy is at the crux of the conflict between feminism and Marxism, between the marriage contract and the employment contract, between the female worker, the male worker, and the gender division of labor, in general. Hartmann has defined patriarchy as the "set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, create or establish interdependence and solidarity among men that enables them to dominate women" (14). Patriarchy accounts for the fact that while some men have control over other men, all men, regardless of rank, have economic and political control over some women. Man is an "unfree master" because he is both master and subordinate (Pateman *Sexual Contract* 42). Patriarchy accounts for male domination; Marxist theory fails to account for patriarchy. In fact, it might be more accurate to say that Marxist theory denies the existence of patriarchy. Patriarchy, however, is a form of power, and despite any denial by Marxism, *all* power is political, even that which is exercised in the so-called private realm (Pateman "Feminist Critiques" 119). The problem of patriarchy should not be seen as a private "feminist issue," but as a public "societal issue."

It is patriarchy which fills the theoretical gaps or assumptions of Marxism on issues concerning woman. Pateman observes that Engels, in his assertion that the solution to women's oppression is to bring women into wage labor, is assuming several points. One is that, once they have entered public industry, women will be equal to men. A second is that "men *as men* have no stake in their power over women." A third is that gender is irrelevant to subordination and that the oppression of woman should be understood as identical to the oppression of the proletariat

(*Sexual Contract* 134).

The existence of patriarchy calls into question these assumptions. In reference to the first, Marxists have claimed that there will be a withering of male domination because women in wage labor would be equal to men. Women have entered wage labor, but male domination has not ended. Women have been incorporated into the workforce as women, not as workers. Marxism does not account for this; patriarchy does.

Nor can Marxism account for why men did not fight for equality of women in wage labor. Why, instead, did men actively fight against women's entrance into wage labor, even though solidarity of all members of the working class would be the strongest weapon in the fight against capitalism? The answer is that men were guarding against inroads into their patriarchal power, their privilege as men.

Women have not received the same treatment as men in the workforce. The sexual division of labor results in restricted opportunities for women. Assuming that women's oppression is identical to that of men's is failing to recognize men and women's different experiences under patriarchy.

Marxists also claimed that the end of capitalism would bring the end of domination by both capital and men because capital would no longer be capable of exploiting women by using them as bargaining tokens. According to Marxism, one way that capital keeps working class men in a subordinate position is by making them unfree masters, by trading women for subservience. What Marxism fails to ask is why men accept this as a valid trade in the first place. Again, patriarchy is the answer to this question.

Marxism and feminism's divergence on the fundamental issue of patriarchy makes the two incompatible. Marxism emphasizes the public sphere,

assuming that the private sphere is separate and unimportant and that women's issues fall into this latter sphere. Patriarchy crosses into both the public and the private spheres, and yet it has no theoretical position in Marxist thought. Patriarchy, however, is found in all relationships, including those of Marxism. Patriarchal power makes the public dominant to the private; it makes the husband dominant to the wife; it makes the male worker dominant to the female worker. Marxism argues that feminist politics obscure class lines by drawing together women from both the proletariat and the bourgeois, and that in doing so, feminism is serving the interests of the ruling class and capitalism. Feminism argues that by failing to combat patriarchy or even admit that it exists, Marxism is serving the interests of capital by maintaining hierarchies among men. In fact, Marxism as an ideology may actually be subversive to women's interests.

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African-Americans and Automobiles in Fiction

Dr. Roger N. Casey

A seeming norm in American literature finds the coupling of automobiles and African Americans leading to calamity: in *Invisible Man* (1952) the protagonist is expelled from college for driving a white trustee across "the white line dividing the highway" to the black side of town (38); in *Native Son* (1940) Bigger Thomas murders Mary Dalton ultimately as a consequence of his position as a chauffeur; and as early as Arna Bontemps's "A Summer Tragedy" (1933) black sharecroppers use their car to commit suicide. White authors coupling blacks and cars have created equally disastrous results: Coalhouse Walker, Jr., of E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (1975) loses his life over the restoration of his Model T Ford, for example. Henry Ford's dictum concerning paint choice on his Model T, "Any color as long as it's black," may identify the primary reason for these characters' travails--the color of their skin. These recurring calamities suggest that to these authors the automobile, the most visible technological machine in American society, embodies a larger machine--that of racism and its byproducts of discrimination, exploitation, and alienation.

"A Summer Tragedy" chronicles the final hours of Jeff and Jenny, aging black sharecroppers who decide to end their lives rather than continue with the infirmities of old age and the difficulties imposed on them by their hard-driving landlord. Their method of demise is their automobile, an aging Model T, which they drive off a cliff into a raging river. On several occasions, Bontemps parallels the increasingly decrepit bodies of Jeff and Jenny with the mechanical condition of "the little rattle-trap car," the Ford becoming emblematic of the couple's condition:

> The engine came to life with a sputter and bang that rattled the old car from radiator to tail light....The sputtering and banging increased. The rattling became more violent. That was good. It was good banging, good sputtering and rattling, and it meant that the aged car was still in running condition. (139)

Jeff's and Jenny's bodies correlate to the mechanical clamor of the car: "The suggestion of the trip fell into the *machinery* of his mind like a wrench....When he took his hands off the wheel, he noticed that he was *trembling* violently....A few moments later she was at the window, her voice *rattling* against the pane like a broken shutter" (139--emphases added). Jeff's heart beats like "the little pounding motor of the car," which "worked harder and harder. The puff of steam from the cracked radiator became larger" (145). Even the shed which houses the car is likened to the house of the old couple and metaphorically to the couple themselves; "miraculously, despite wind and downpour, it still stood" (139).

Clearly Bontemps wishes us to view the old couple in much the same vein as the vehicle: both have existed for a service function, and both have been literally driven into the ground. Jeff comments how his landlord feels that one mule is enough to plow forty acres and how such a philoso-

phy has resulted in the deaths of many mules, and many men, he adds. He is proud to have survived such a rigorous existence. Yet like the Model T, his and Jenny's radiators are cracked: he is partially crippled by a stroke, Jenny is blind, and both fear they will end up like a discarded mule, or a junked automobile. They therefore choose to do what they perceive they must do to die with dignity.

Neither Jeff nor Jenny can bear the loss of each other: he is her eyes, she his hands. The old couple and the car also have a symbiotic relationship. Jeff and Jenny could have chosen a more passive role for the car in their suicides, for example, using it for carbon monoxide poisoning. Instead, they have the car "die" with them, and Bontemps leaves us, not with the couple, but with the image of the torn car:

> In another instant the car hit the water and dropped immediately out of sight. A little later it lodged in the mud of a shallow place. One wheel of the crushed and upturned little Ford became visible above the rushing water. (148)

The couple regards the car as "a peculiar treasure" (139). Like most farmers of the thirties, they find the car indispensable. The automobile is their one link to the outside world, their source of mobility, particularly since old age cripples the mobility of their own bodies. Ironically, in spite of the car, they are unable to escape from their condition, neither physically nor economically, and this compounds their desperate state. Before his death, Jeff remembers especially one event in his life: the time he took a trip to New Orleans, the last time he really left the farm behind. Now the old couple goes on one final journey, a journey to their deaths made possible by the car.

The story of one old couple may seem insignificant, as

Bontemps relates in this image: "Chugging across the green countryside, the small, battered Ford seemed tiny indeed" (140); yet since their story is called a tragedy, the two are obviously meant to be seen as heroic figures. They exemplify the untold stories of countless lives worn out as cogs in a machine exploiting them for cheap labor and holding them captive in indebtedness. In the story's conclusion we are torn between rejoicing over the couple's ability to die in a manner they see befitting dignity and outrage over the harshness of a life which has led them to make such a decision. Like a Model T, Jeff and Jenny have been pushed to their limits and discarded, products of a cycle of exploitation.

In another story from the same year, "Saturday Night: Portrait of a Small Southern Town, 1933," Bontemps again uses automobiles to illuminate racial oppression in his society. In this story the narrator speaks from his car as he drives through town on a Saturday evening. A white man has been killed by a hit-and-run driver, leading one character to remark: "We know right well that it *was* a colored man who was driving that car....That driver refused to stop because he feard a mob" (164). On another occasion a political speaker remarks: "Take Macon County fer'n instance. Down yonder there's seven niggers to every white man....Yet 'n still they got heap better roads 'n we got here in Madison County" (159). Both quotations clearly demonstrate prevailing racist attitudes, but by far the most prominent racist incident involving an automobile recounts the story of two black men helping a white driver:

> [A]t the turn of the Pike there is an automobile stuck in the heavy mud. We slow down. The white driver beckons to two blacks who are about to pass him without stopping: "Come here boys, give me a push." They do not speak but come quietly and set

> their muscles against the weight of the car. Presently it gets away. The driver does not pause or look back....Apparently neither they nor the driver have been aware of anything irregular in the episode that summoned them to push a carload of able men out of the mud and left them ankle deep in the spot as the others drove away. Apparently there is no pang, no tragedy. (168-69)

These incidents involving automobiles clearly show the second-class life of blacks in a small Southern town--they are left in the mud while whites use them and drive away. Bontemps would have us feel a pang and see these stories as the tragedies they are.

Richard Wright's *Native Son* moves from Bontemps's rural settings to urban Chicago, but the protagonist, Bigger Thomas, is also victimized, unable to escape. Again the automobile is connected to his plight. Early in the novel Wright uses passing cars to illustrate the restlessness of Bigger and his unemployed companions. Like Bontemps's two men in the mud, Bigger and his friends are left behind as those empowered by the automobile drive by: "They waited leisurely at corners for cars to pass; it was not that they feared cars, but they had plenty of time" (31). Bigger has too much time on his hands, and in that time his growing sense of alienation and anger festers. He wishes he could escape. As a symbol of this desire, he steals auto tires, the wheels for his flight.

Potential relief comes in his job as driver for the "philanthropic" Daltons, a position which allows Bigger to dream of escape. When he first gets the job, he imagines his vehicle:

> He hoped it would be a Packard, or a Lincoln, or a Rolls Royce. Boy! Would he drive! Just wait! Of course, he would be careful when he was driving

> Miss or Mr. Dalton. But when he was alone he would burn up the pavement; he would make those tires smoke! (60-61)

Peter Marsh and Peter Collett write:

> For many individuals, driving a car is one of the few opportunities to escape from a life of routine submission....The car is, for them, a technological leveller....Challenges...can be taken up and symbolic battles won. (165)

The car provides such an opportunity for Bigger; it furnishes the only real feeling of power he has ever had:

> He had a keen sense of power when driving; the feel of a car added something to him. He loved to press his foot against a pedal and sail along, watching others stand still, seeing the asphalt road unwind under him. (63)

Bigger sees the automobile as a way out of his depressed existence, yet paradoxically, it is responsible for his plight. His situation represents the condition of many inner-city blacks after the automotive revolution. Economic opportunities increased because of the automobile, yet such opportunities were often located out of the reach of those without cars. Dan Lacy elaborates in *The White Use of Blacks in America:*

> The very ease of private automobile transportation led to a decay and abandonment of public transportation even where it existed, and there was little incentive for the establishment of new transit or bus lines to serve the new areas. Blacks who could not afford to own and maintain cars in the city were hopelessly blocked from employment in precisely those types of plants in which opportunities were largest and most promising. (216)

Unable to find good jobs, inner-city blacks like Bigger

worked at unskilled labor or in domestic positions, if they had jobs at all.

Bigger's dreams of power through the automobile quickly crumble when Mary Dalton asks him to drive her to the black side of town: "It was a shadowy region, a No Man's Land, the ground that separated the white world from the black that he stood upon. He felt naked, transparent..." (67-68). Mary's request violates Bigger's sense of order, thereby making him vulnerable. Wright describes Bigger's sense of losing control: "He was not driving; he was simply sitting and floating along smoothly through darkness" (77-78). This darkness engulfs Bigger, and ultimately it leads him to smother Mary in his panic over being caught in her bedroom, an act which eventually results in his execution.

Like Bigger Thomas, the protagonist of *Invisible Man* is ruined by driving a white person. Wright tells of Bigger's proximity to Mary that "never in his life had he been so close to a white woman" (68), and the invisible man finds himself in the same position with Mr. Norton, the white trustee of the college, asserting: "I had never been so close to a white person before" (84). Like Bigger, the invisible man is initially elated by the power he feels in commanding an automobile, yet he also has a sense of impending doom because of his proximity to whiteness: he declares, "We were driving, the powerful motor purring and filling me with pride and anxiety" (37), and "Riding here in the powerful car with this white man who was so pleased with what he called his fate, I felt a sense of dread" (40).

The invisible man fears the crossing of the white line: both entering into the territory of power and wealth which society has taught him is reserved for white people and taking someone from the white world into the true world of

the African-American community, the world of Trueblood and of the Golden Day. "I suddenly decided to turn off the highway, down a road that seemed unfamiliar," the invisible man narrates of the journey to Trueblood's (40). Down this unfamiliar road they approach "a team of oxen hitched to a broken-down wagon," a clear contrast to the symbol of success and power of the automobile (40). The white line of the highway becomes the symbol for this line of division between black and white in society: "I wished we were back on the other side of the white line, heading back to the quiet green stretch of the campus," the narrator declares (49); and on another occasion he states, "The wheel felt like an alien thing in my hands as I followed the white line of the highway" (96). The trip to the Golden Day further compounds the crossing of the line, and symbolically the invisible man drives there on the wrong side of the road. As with Bigger, this act of crossing the white line leads the invisible man to lose control of his destiny: "I had a sense of losing control of the car and slammed on the brakes in the middle of the road...," he declares (97). The invisible man's fate is best represented by Ellison's description of an insect that "crushed itself against the windshield, leaving a yellow, mucous smear" (44). He is crushed, destroyed by the circumstances of this encounter, an encounter that demonstrates little real change in the social position of African-Americans since emancipation. Indeed, when we last see the car, it has stopped "in front of a small building with white pillars like those of an old plantation manor house," seemingly indicating times have not changed at all (98).

Jean Rosenbaum asserts that the automobile "is more than a convenience; it is a symbol...of belonging to a group, and it brings group recognition" (2). The invisible man wants to be part of "the group." At one point with

Mr. Norton he thinks: "[W]ith the car leaping leisurely beneath the pressure of my foot, I identified myself with the rich man reminiscing on the rear seat..." (39). This identification suggests that the invisible man wishes to appropriate whiteness, and his emulation of the hegemony of the white superstructure, as represented by Mr. Norton, leads to his downfall. Only after realizing he must embrace blackness and not try to appropriate whiteness and objects connected to the white power structure, such as fancy cars, does the invisible man become self-actualized.

Ragtime demonstrates that Caucasian writers also tie automobiles to the demise of African-American characters. Like the invisible man, Doctorow's character, Coalhouse Walker, Jr., also wants to belong to the power group. Driving a new Model T and wearing goggles and a duster, Walker appears at the home of a white family housing Sarah, the mother of his child. The family's father finds Walker's status exceptional: "It occurred to father one day that Coalhouse Walker Jr. didn't know he was a Negro" (185). Walker, however, knows that "as the owner of a car he was a provocation to many white people" (199). One of the people Walker provokes, the racist fire chief Will Conklin, asks Walker for a toll to pass his firehouse. Walker leaves to get a policeman and upon returning discovers his car muddied, torn, and defecated on. He demands reparation, but in the ensuing exchange the officer arrests him. The following day he returns to find the car thoroughly vandalized, pushed into a pond, wires ripped from the engine: "Waterlogged and wrecked, it offended the sensibilities of anyone who respected machines and valued what they could do" (274).

Walker becomes obsessed with justice over the restoration of his car, yet he is unable to obtain it because of Conklin's judicial connections. Then, another incident

involving an automobile compounds his rage. Sarah attempts to plead Walker's case before the visiting U.S. Vice President, and as he exits his Panhard limousine, she bolts toward him. Suspected of being an assassin, she is mortally wounded by a blow from a gun. Ironically, an expensive automobile much like that which carried the Vice President bears her to her funeral:

> a custom Pierce Arrow Opera Coach with an elongated passenger compartment and a driver's cab open to the weather....The car was so highly polished the boy could see in its rear doors a reflection of the entire street. (223)

Walker then becomes a vigilante, burning down firehouses and leaving the demand: "I want my automobile returned to me in its original condition. If these conditions are not met I will continue to kill firemen and burn firehouses until they are" (243). He forms a gang that executes terrorist activities in quick strikes from automobiles, and these acts lead the New York legislature to enact an automobile registration law so that vehicles might be traced. Eventually the gang takes over the J. P. Morgan Library, and Conklin is forced to restore the car on the street in front of the edifice. Walker ultimately surrenders, but upon exiting the building is needlessly shot and killed.

To Walker, the struggle for racial equality begins with justice over the destruction of his Ford; he feels "with an enemy as vast as an entire nation of the white race, the restoration of a Model T automobile was as good a place to start as any" (337). That Walker owns a Model T is interesting, not only because of *Ragtime*'s emphasis on the interchangeability of parts, as the Model T had, but also because of Henry Ford's dealings with black employees in Detroit. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick's *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* addresses this association. At one

time Ford was the largest employer of African-Americans in Detroit. He saw "in black America an eager reservoir of workers committed to the American system" (14); however, Ford viewed African-Americans and other minority groups as "social outcasts who needed and would appreciate his help" (11). Ford's patronizing attitude, like that of Wright's "philanthropic" Daltons and *Invisible Man*'s Mr. Norton, does not promote equality and opportunity, but rather reupholsters the notion of the superiority of white society, positioning whites as saviors of the downtrodden black community. Walker's assertion that the restitution of his Ford is as good a place to start as any thus can extend beyond the car to Ford himself and particularly to the enterprises practiced by the white capitalist elite.

Jeff and Jenny, Bigger Thomas, the invisible man, and Coalhouse Walker are all associated with the automobile, perhaps the most visible symbol of the machine age. They are also victimized by another machine--racism. All are victims of the alienation, discrimination, and exploitation of a racist system; and all die, except the invisible man, who recognizes the turnings of the machine before it grinds him to death in its cogs. *Ragtime*'s Father "said it was ridiculous to allow a motorcar to take over everyone's life as it now had" (217); nevertheless, the car is the most visible mechanical symbol of empowerment in our society. Jeff, Jenny, Bigger, the invisible man, and Coalhouse all want to have power, the power they feel society owes them as human adults. Owning, or even driving, a car gives them a sense of having made it, of being part of the economic power structure. Yet it is a short-lived and unfounded sense for all. In spite of the symbolic power of the automobile, it imparts no real economic nor political empowerment. Despite their car, Jeff and Jenny can

escape the system which ensnares them only in death; both Bigger and the invisible man's cars carry them on destructive paths; and Coalhouse Walker pays for his Model T with his life. In the works of Bontemps, Wright, Ellison, and Doctorow, the automobile assumes a larger-than-life role as a precipitator of doom, an emphatic emblem of the injustices of the American system.

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Wesley Edwards is a senior political science major from Columbus, Georgia. His career interest includes working in higher education and in the public sector, especially in

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Amorak Huey is a senior English major/political science minor from Trussville, Alabama. After doing graduate work in literature and creative writing at Florida State on a University Fellowship, Amorak hopes to one day become a writer and a teacher so he never has to face the real world.

Natalie Meyer is a senior double majoring in English and political science. An Air Force Brat, she spent most of high school in Germany, so attending college in Alabama provided quite a case of culture shock. In an effort to subject herself to further culture shock, after graduation she will head to Japan to teach English.

Stephen Nickson is a junior from Gadsden, Alabama. He enjoys taking black and white pictures, fishing from an innertube, and brushing his teeth in the shower. In the future, he plans to read many different books on many different things so that he can write about the same things over and over again, only doing it better and better.

Michael Peacock, a senior philosophy/English major, learned to write at a very young age in a dark, damp basement where his parents kept him chained. His paper covers both philosophical and literary topics which are, no doubt, very useful in every day life. Upon graduation, if he cannot decide which job to accept, Michael hopes to continue his education at the expense of others and with no particular goal in mind.

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